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A VILLAGE COMMUNE BY OUIDA.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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A
VILLAGE COMMUNE

BY
O U I D A,
AUTHOR OF "MOTHS," "PIPISTRELLO," ETC.

"L'ÉTAT C'EST MOI."

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LEIPZIG
BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1881.

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A VILLAGE COMMUNE.

CHAPTER I.

ALL the winter would roll away ere he would behold the eyes of his betrothed; he who should have wedded her in the mid-summer months, when the crickets were chaunting in the trees, and the magnolias and the rose-laurels were all ablaze with bloom. During the four months since his arrest he had striven to keep his reason and his patience, saying always to himself that he would be set free at once when his cause should be clearly heard. Hope had sustained him all that while, but now he had no hope.

The sentence had been passed; the doors had closed, the bolts been fastened on him.

He was in prison for seven months.

Ah! judges and gentlemen of the council, who put youths in your prison cells for bathing in a river

in the heat, for rescuing a dog from the slaughterer, for begging for a coin when their old mothers or their young babes starve and perish, how much I should like you to taste that prison yourselves! The Bastille was the royal dungeon of the noblesse, and scarcely deserved the rage of the people; but these petty bastilles all over the land, where by petty laws the honest, the poor, the helpless, the courageous, for every trifling act of life are thrown to break their hearts as they may, and from which they can only issue with blackened names and ruined characters—when will these accursed places, that mingle the righteous with the unrighteous, the godly and the innocent with the thief and the assassin, surrender to the summons of the nation, and be dismantled and destroyed?

Never so long as Messer Nellemane and his kind shall reign; and make of every brave impulse of pity, of every despairing cry of want, a crime.

Carmelo, lying on the hard narrow bed of the prison cell, recovered from his swoon, stared with dull aching eyes up at the ceiling; the prison had been an old palace once, and on the ceiling, which was a section of what had been once a grand and vaulted roofing of a banqueting hall, there was still in unfaded frescoes a little group of angels bearing palms and flying up against the stars.

Those angels seemed a mockery to Carmelo; the innocent lad to whom the saints and the sons of God had been no whit less real than the poplars on the river shore, hated them now, and thought them cruel deceptions, beautiful fair lies.

"If they were really up there beyond the sun, they would not let these things be," he said between his teeth, lying on his back, and knowing that for seven long months he would be a prisoner, treated like a felon, because a vile wrong had been done to him, and he had justly chastised it.

Carmelo had always been in the open air, up whilst the skies were still dark, on the road with the mule, at work under the trees, fishing in the Rosa water, dashing the ruddy grain down into the black mouth of the shaft; on feast days and holy days strolling through the lanes and fields with a flower behind his ear, or thrumming his mandoline in the moonlight under the porch; a free life and a happy one, doing no harm and thinking none, enjoying vaguely but intensely, as the bull enjoys the pastures when the springtide grass is sweet in the dew of dawn; a natural life and a wholesome life, with free movement of the limbs and unpolluted air in the lungs, dumb in outward expression, but keen to inward pleasure from scent, and sight, and sound.

To him every moment in this close den, without a breath of air, with scarce a gleam of sunlight, was despair. A day in a prison to a free-born son of the soil, used to work with the broad bright sky alone above his head, is more agony than a year of it is to a cramped city-worker used only to the twilight of a machine-room or a workshop, only to an air full of smuts and smoke, and the stench of acids, and the dust of filed steel or sifted coal. The suffering of the two cannot be compared, and one among many of the injustices the law, all over the world, commits is that it never takes into consideration what a man's past has been. There are those to whom a prison is a hell; there are those to whom it is something better than the life they led.

Carmelo lay on his rough sacking, and stared at the painted angels that the last glow of the sunset had illumined, and he thought that on the morrow he would be a madman and know nothing. That was his fear. His brain boiled and burned in his skull, and his heart seemed to pant and leap like a wounded hare springing before the hounds.

When the gaoler looked in at morning, the lad was in high fever: they called the parish doctor of Pomodoro, he pronounced it to be congestion of the brain. They took him in a litter to the infirmary, a dark, foul smelling, ill-kept place, where the doctor

tried experiments on the patients as he pleased, and cut up dogs and cats alive in a back room, and flattered himself that this was science.

When will the truth be written of hospitals anywhere? If ever it were written, the faculty would swear it all a lie.

No one hardly ever recovered in this infirmary, certainly none were ever the better for it. All Carmelo's auburn locks were shaved off, and many ounces of blood were taken from him, and little else was done; he was a prisoner, and really it did not matter. His father, who was not allowed to see him, drew his last franc out of the Cassa di Risparmio* to bespeak the doctor's care for him, and the doctor took the fees; secretly, as he was forbidden by the rules to touch a centime.

"The dear lad, he has ruined me!" thought the old man, who was feeble and broken in health since the fit before the Pretura, and who had spent nearly his all over the long account of the notary; "dear lad, he has ruined me! Yet he is as innocent as a babe unborn!"

The miller was not a weak man, nor given to such weaknesses, but the hot tears rose in his eyes and fell down his furrowed cheeks as he left the

* Savings-bank.

hospital bed. He was not allowed to stay there, nor to send any sister or brother of Carmelo's to him, and he felt as though his tough heart would break, as he got up behind his good grey horse and jolted over the ruts of the road in the twilight of the November afternoon.

Why had all this ever come upon him? Who put these thieves and tyrants there on those stools of office?

The Government had done, he supposed. To him, the Government meant the King. He cursed the King. How could he tell that the King had no more to do with these things than with the melons and pumpkins that had ripened with the summer sun under his garden wall?

It is the White Cross of Savoy which the ink splashes of Messer Nellemane's documents stain in the people's eyes.

How can you expect them to comprehend the contradictions of constitutionalism?

The King caused it all, and set Messer Nellemane on that office throne; so thought Demetrio Pastorini, and so think tens of thousands; but the thought failed to console the old miller as he went along the dusky road that he knew so well; indeed it made his pain the more bitter to him, because he had lost a dearly beloved and only brother in

days when they were young, in those wars against the "stranieri" which they were told had given them freedom.

So weary were his thoughts and so preoccupied, and so dim were his eyes with tears, that if the good grey horse had not been acquainted with the way for fifteen years, he might have missed it for aught that his master did to guide him.

"*Hè—o! Ouf!*" cried the old man to the horse in surprise, as his own mill-house loomed through the grey shadows, and the horse checked his trot without the command.

In the mist of the autumn night that was closing in, he could see the figure of his eldest daughter as she ran out to him; she was sobbing, and the sound of her sobs was borne to him through the cold, quiet, misty air.

"Oh father," she stammered, "Oh father!" and then she came to the side of the cart, and lifted herself up on the side of the wheel and caught his hand: "Oh father!" she cried again.

The old man trembled.

"What is it new of sorrow?" he said: he spoke almost roughly from very fear.

The girl standing up on the shaft caught his hand:

"Oh father, do not mind too much—the trees!"

"The trees!"

He said no more; he got down off the cart and threw the reins of rope to the youngest boy.

"Lead the horse to the stable," he said unsteadily. "The trees? what of the trees?"

He strode off in the darkness towards the river, and the girl followed him.

"Oh father!" she said again with a great sob.

There was very little light but the gleam of the moon as the clouds swept by; it was enough to show him what had been done in his absence.

Three of the poplars had been felled.

"Oh father!" said the girl catching at his hands once more. "We did all we could to stop them, but they would not wait. There were six of them with hatchets, and an overseer. They said they had the right by law. Oh father!——"

CHAPTER II.

BEFORE the week was out the trees were all down, and the wood by the mill was a thing of memory alone. Demetrio Pastorini was powerless. He had misunderstood his own rights and the ways of the laws.

When the wood-cutters and the overseer came on the morrow, he was like one beside himself. He got down his old gun from the shelf, and would have shot the first man that dared approach the *boschetto*, but his young sons and daughters weeping about him made his nerve and his purpose fail; they got the weapon from him, and besought him for their sakes to be patient.

"Patient!" he cried to them. "Shall we be patient while we are stripped alive as the live lamb is stripped of her skin, she bleeding at every pore? Patient? you are poltroons! You eat the dust! You are no children of my blood. Let me be!"

But they clung about him notwithstanding, and pleaded that better was it to suffer wrong than to do it, and sweeter in heaven's sight; and so besought him, in the name of Christ and of their own,

that he, being a religious man, and one most affectionate, gave way at last, and dropped into his wooden chair and wept, and bore as best he could the sound of crashing axe, of falling trunk, of wrenching wood, of shivering leaf.

"Must the King, who has dominion from sea to sea, over all the land and the greatness of it, must he grudge me my little all?" he cried in his agony, as he heard the blows of the hatchet on the trees.

CHAPTER III.

BEFORE the week was out the poplars were all down, as I have said, and the birds that had made their homes in them had flown, shrilly piping in their woe, across the Rosa water.

Messer Nellemane visited the spot often.

The municipal soul loves destruction. Whether it beholds a noble and fair monument of ancient times being changed to dust and rubble by the hammers of masons, or whether it sees a gracious sylvan haunt alter to a desolation of sand and stones beneath the hatchets of wood-cutters, the municipal soul is equally full of an exceeding joy, of an unspeakable contentment.

Messer Nellemane, who possessed the municipal soul in its entire perfection, was thus happy now; and his happiness was further pointed by the acid pungency of a grudge paid off, a vengeance accomplished.

It was a sad sight to other eyes than his: the mossy bank where Toppa had used to roam stamped down into mud, the brave trees felled, their yellow leaves churned into a paste of earth

and water, the branches piled in squares to be sold for firewood, the tall trunks trimmed and set in rows to be disposed of as timber; all the place unsightly, naked, miserable, where all had been so lately freshness, and peace, and forest loveliness.

The white wall of the mill-house stood bare and ugly, no friendly shadows cast on it from waving boughs. The heart of the miller seemed broken in his breast; he could scarce bear to pass his door; he could not bear to look across the stream.

He never spoke of it to anyone since the trees had gone.

Once his third son, little Dante, said timidly:

"Is it well, father, that they should sell the wood like that? They have not paid you."

Then Demetrio Pastorini said to him:

"If they sold your sister to the brothel would you squabble to share the price? Pay? no, they will never pay. They are thieves. Thieves do not pay for what they take."

Then the young man was afraid, and did not dare to speak of the wood again.

After a while the timber was carried away, and the boughs also; no one knew where they went; it was understood to go to the City. No one ventured to inquire, since the stern lips of Pastorini were dumb.

If he had spoken he would have learned little: he would have heard that the engineers had valued his possession, and the municipality had contracted to pay for it: that was all he would have been told. He did not know that he was highly honoured, and that they were treating him exactly as the princely owner of Farnesina was treated before him.

This destruction of the boschetto, which had been a favourite haunt for feast days with the neighbours, and the dread of the iron way that was to follow it, harassed and saddened all the people in Santa Rosalia, and added to the gloom of a wet and stormy November, which was in turn followed by an unusual and severe winter.

The harvest had been good, and so had been the vintage, and so also proved the olive-gathering, rain notwithstanding, and as foreign papers innocently wrote, nothing was wanting to the happiness of the country.

But the foreign papers only read the statistics of corn, wine, and oil, and did not try to see any further; indeed, having started with this fixed idea of Italian happiness, would not have believed any explanations proving the contrary. Foreign papers did not understand that, as the local taxes always go up in proportion to the excellence of harvest and vintage, that excellence is not the unmixed gain

which it is supposed to be, and, indeed, is scant profit to anyone.

The more you have, the more I take, say the municipalities to the communities; there can be no more admirable recipe for keeping a populace poor.

CHAPTER IV.

IN Santa Rosalia the winter was hard and, for this country, long. Snow came; not the snow of cold countries, with all the glories of an ice-clad, frost-hung world; not snow pure, serene, beautiful, with holly-berries red against it, and fir-trees dark, not the snow of lands where snow means Noël, Santa Claus, or Father Christmas; but snow that fell in the night and melted in the day, and left a muddy, slushy, watery, slippery slough of despond in its place: snow that killed the olive, broke the arbutus boughs, withered into death the passion-flower, and changed to putrefaction the aloe and the cactus; snow that blurred out all the sunny pastoral loveliness, and made the landscape grey and sear.

In this sort of winter-time the poor are the first to pine and perish everywhere, but soonest of all in this land of sunshine and south wind.

The impetuous Rosa was as over full of water as it had been low and shallow in the midsummer; it ran out over its banks and flooded the fields, where Science brought in with Liberty had felled the trees and hedges that had used to serve as dykes.

There was no work in the flooded or in the frozen fields; the contadini wanted no labourers; there was nothing to be done anywhere; there was a score of empty hands ready if ever such a little job needed the doing.

The houses, all built for warm weather, with their open loggie and their ill-fitting windows, were swept through by the north wind as though they had been canvas tents. There was scant fuel; the old times were gone when they could glean it on all the hill-sides, for the best reason, that nearly all the woods were felled. Wine was so dear no poor man could drink it, and bread was frightfully dear, too. The people cowered over their little brown pots of lighted *brace*, and did not complain. When anyone gave them a coin they were passionately grateful.

Most winters they suffered like this; but this winter the suffering was greater than usual. A few said something about getting work in the Maremma, where all work is done in winter; but they might as well have spoken of getting work in the moon; they could as well get to the one as the other. They

had no idea how to travel there, and nothing to travel with; besides, nine-tenths of them were women and children, for whom the Maremma had no need and no room.

Of course these people were very thankless and unreasonable. There was a railway twelve miles off, there was going to be gas in Pomodoro, and there was Messer Nellemane in their midst, all three monuments of progress.

But these silly people persisted in feeling that they would prefer cheap wine, cheap bread, and stomachs full of both, even to a railway, gas, or Messer Nellemane.

The winter is never very long in Italy, yet this seemed very long indeed. The mill wheels, after having been immovable from drought, were now useless from ice, and the miller, from a plump, jovial, strong man, had become thin, haggard, and silent, feeling the weight of bitter sorrow and the aching of money-cares.

In Pippo's little house the blue Madonna heard no laughter and saw no fire-gleam.

The old man had grown taciturn and irritable. Misfortune is no sweetener of temper or of bread. He would sit long together, crouched in a corner immovable, and his lips were at such times always moving inaudibly; he was counting up the sums of

which they had robbed him; counting them again and again; a hundred times a day, a hundred times a night.

They had but little to live on: no one bought straw plaiting in winter, and, as he could not cut the osiers in the river, the rush-working of Pippo brought but small profit.

When they could have a dish of oil and beans they were very thankful; when they could not they boiled a little bread in water with a bit of garlic, and tried to believe it was soup.

Now and then they had a drop of bad coffee without milk: that was all: as wine they had *mezzo-vino*, that is, the last juices of the already-squeezed grape-skins diluted with water, a drink to which vinegar were sweetness.

The Italian poor know as little of the bacon, and potatoes, and tea of the English labourer, as they do of the champagne and mutton of the English mechanic.

In summer time they can do well enough: there is the gracious sun shining on them, and there is always work to be had; but in winter there is terrible suffering, the more terrible, I think, because so quiet: the people die, that is all.

"Patience," they say, to the last; but their patience brings them nothing.

In Santa Rosalia there was great want, and there was nobody to succour it: the nobles of the province were away in the City keeping carnival, and no *fattore* ever cares for the poor: he gets labour cheap if he requires it, that is his view of the universal misery.

Vezzaja and Ghiralda possessed a charitable society; it was named after that purest of all saints, the Confraternità di San Francisco di Assisi, and it dated back to the thirteenth century.

Originally it had been a very noble society, and had owned broad lands, of which many estates still remained to it. It had been self-denying, generous, religious, in the highest sense of that word, and gentle and simple had been proud to be its ministers; but of this character there did not now remain to it so much as there did remain of its revenues. The rich were very willing to be on its staff; but the poor were not very willing to apply to it; it had a way of considering a case for three months, and then ordering as relief a few pounds of bread, which, when a whole family was waiting, and starving, and dying, was a little too dilatory to be very efficient.

But the fraternity of St. Francis still had its old palace in Pomodoro; still had its historical archives and its pious repute; still had nobles and gentlemen

on its committee; and if it only gave a little bread now and then—well—pauperism, they say, should not be encouraged; and if its funds were never very clearly accounted for, we know these mediæval institutions cannot be worked in the mediæval way nowadays: St. Francis saluted Lady Poverty; but we keep her well outside the door while we ask for her certificate.

Now old 'Nunziatina had an attack of bronchitis at this time, and though she recovered, which was little short of a miracle, she was by no means so strong again as she had been; and her draughty room under the tiles, scorching in summer, and frozen in winter, shared with three other old women, and without any stove, or any glass in the window, was not an abode to favour convalescence. The *vicario* of Santa Maria seeing this, bethought him of the Fraternity of St. Francis, and gave her a letter to its committee, urging her age, and honesty, and recent sickness, as fit reasons why she should benefit by this noble charity.

There was a quantity of money locked up in the revenues of this Fraternity, and it had been intended for the poor; but then the present age, the age of Messer Nellemane, knows better than to spend it on the poor.

Those old times were so different to ours: dif-

ferent methods of administration become a necessity in modern days. The Fraternity made a great flourish, and printed long reports, and still charmed the province into subscriptions and donations; but if St. Francis could have been present when the accounts were made up, his benignant eyes would have blazed with the fury of his offended God.

Annunziata blessed Dom Lelio, and took the letter and the sixty centimes he gave her for the diligence, and betook herself, and her staff, and her broad hat, and her short petticoat into the rickety vehicle with much joy and hopefulness of spirit. If she could get a certain little pension, if it were only a franc a week, she felt that she could praise heaven with a full heart. Her trotting round to all the outlying farm houses and villages with her basket was getting very toilsome to her.

Now, the President of the Fraternity was a certain most noble Count Saverio, who had a high repute as a philanthropist, and whose villa was close by to Pomodoro.

The Count gave his services, which were highly appreciated, nominally for nothing, saying, with much eloquence, that all his life was dedicated to service of God and the poor; and if he did do a good deal at the Bourse, and buy a great many *terni* at Lotto, that was his own affair, and in no way concerned

St. Francis. Besides he did it through agents; and his own name never was heard except in connection with philanthropy.

This very noble and pious gentleman received old 'Nunziatina, who made him a nice curtesy, and wished him every blessing in her cheery cordial way, which was as pleasant to hear as a bird's chirping; he was sitting surrounded with ledgers and folios, in the muniment room of the castellated house of this ancient brotherhood; and he spoke so prettily and amiably to her that she felt quite sure of ten francs a month.

He was a long time looking over her papers and reading the priest's recommendation; and then he smiled, and fussed about, and rang for his clerk, and whispered with him, and scribbled something and slipped it in a drawer, and then, finally looking across his writing-table at Annunziata, said very pleasantly:

"Money-charities we never give; but come again on this day month, and we will see if any exception can be made in your favour. I will put your case before the board: my compliments and reverence to the good Dom Lelio."

The old woman made him another deep curtesy, and went away with a cruel disappointment nipping her old heart.

She did not protest. Italians rarely do.

That day the Count Saverio met Messer Nellemane in the streets of Pomodoro.

"Oh! by the way," said the Count, "one of the people of your village was sent to me to-day by the *vicario*. Perhaps you can tell me something of her, for Dom Lelio's heart is apt to run away with his head. He wants us to grant her permanent weekly relief; an old woman, an odd-looking old trot, by name Taormina Annunziata, a widow."

Messer Nellemane looked shocked.

"Dom Lelio is very unwise," he said gravely. "The person you speak of is one of the worst people in the *borgo*. A professional beggar. A confirmed beggar. She is very well off, they tell me; but she has that passion and preference for mendicancy which is like a disease."

"Dear, dear!" said the President. "That is terrible. We must never encourage mendicancy. Dom Lelio should not put the society in such a position."

"What would you, Signore Conte?—He is a priest!" said Messer Gaspardo with that scoff which is always on the lips of the Liberal; but seldom finds an echo in the hearts of the people.

The President smiled a little deprecatory smile, for of course he was a Liberal too, but as he was

head of a semi-religious corporation he could not quite laugh at the priesthood.

The month passed over Annunziata's grey head painfully; it was very cold, and she could make but little way about to those outlying farms where they had given her the most food. But her niece spared her all she could, and she said to herself every day, "The gentleman promised he would think it over; he will be sure to do something for me when I go;" and being of a very sanguine temperament, she managed to live on hope,

Her most dazzling idea was that they might allow her half a franc a day, but that she felt was too brilliant to be realised; if she got ten francs a month she felt she could ask nothing better of the saints in heaven or the gentlemen on earth.

It was with a glad spirit that she set out to Pomodoro on a chilly morning on the day appointed; she had smartened herself up as well as she knew how; she liked to look respectable. She had her black hat tied under her chin, with a yellow handkerchief and a blue woollen skirt that a *fattoressa* up in the hills had given her at Ceppo, and a little rough red jacket that belonged to Viola.

She was very smart, indeed, for Annunziata was far above the idea of the professed beggar, that rags and dirt were more likely to provoke charity than

cleanliness and order. She was no beggar at all; she never stretched her hand out for a farthing; she was old and people were kind to her; that was all.

With a smile of happy expectancy she stood once more before the Signore Conte Saverio in the muniment room.

But the President had no smile in return for her. He looked up with a stern glance from his books and papers, and he frowned as he saw who was the petitioner.

"You were so good as to tell me to come this day, sir," said the little old woman, as he remained silent. "You were so very kind as to say you would give me something, and all the month I have been living on your word, sir, for the winter is hard."

Count Saverio, who had such a milk-and-honey-reputation to lose that an act of severity was disagreeable to him, coughed and cleared his throat, and then said with the air of a father reproving a child: "*Cara mia*, it pains me very greatly to have pained you, but I can only say that the good Dom Lelio has been very much to blame. This honourable and charitable fraternity is established on the scope and to the end of the relief—the judicious relief—of the deserving poor, of the honest poor, of

the laborious poor. It was never intended to support a beggar."

"No, sir?" said Annunziata, puzzled and not following his drift, for she never thought of herself as a beggar.

"It was never intended to encourage mendicancy," pursued the President, gathering a heavier frown as he warmed with his theme. "Mendicancy is the curse of the country. It is the heaviest sin to foster it. All our efforts are directed to its suppression. The first qualification to be fit to claim the aid of our society is *never to have begged*. Now you—you are an habitual mendicant; you habitually subsist on public alms. No doubt some frightful improvidence in your youth has brought you to this pass in your old age? With that we have nothing to do; all that concerns us is to obey the laws of the Fraternity. You are not eligible for election; you are not even eligible for momentary relief from our funds. You are a beggar."

Annunziata stared hard at him, her little bright bird-like eyes wide open with amazement.

"A beggar, sir? I?" she stammered. "No, that I never was. People are good to me and I bless them. As for spending when I was young, sir, that I never did, for I was left a widow when I was forty-two, sir—my man fell off a house-top, and I

had to bring up four children, and I did bring them up well, sir, all beautiful grown men and maidens, though every one of them are in Paradise now—and I always was very poor, sir, though it is true that when I was young the land was happy and the people too, not starved, and pinched, and squeezed like lemons in a presser as they are now-a-days. But spend I never could, sir, because I never had but just enough to keep life in my children and me, and now that I am old, sir, seventy-six come the blessed day of St. Peter, the people that have known me all my life are good to me, and may the saints remember them for it, for what can a woman of my age earn, though I do say I can see to plait still?”

“Enough!” said the Count sternly. “You may gloss it over as you please, you are a beggar; you have no other means of subsistence than by the charity of others.”

“No, sir; and that is why I come here,” said Annunziata, who was not without a spirit.

“Beggars are ineligible,” said the President impatiently as well as severely this time. “You are a beggar. Dom Lelio committed an offence against the law in recommending you for the charity of this community. We have nothing to do with you. Our rules would forbid us if we were inclined. You had

no business whatever to come here; I am occupied. I must request you to withdraw."

"I beg your pardon, sir; pray do not hurt Dom Lelio for me. He meant what he did in all goodness," said Annunziata with a quivering lip; and then she dropped her little curtesy and went out, and going across the street, at the cold dark shelter of the opposite church sank on her knees on the pavement before the nearest altar and sobbed bitterly.

We who eat and drink as we wish every day, and on the score of our appetites suffer nought save perhaps something from the Nemesis of dyspepsia, we can ill realise what the disappointment is of a denial that refuses daily bread, and leaves an old and painful life alone to the menace of a death by hunger; we cannot understand, try how we will, what they mean—the empty cupboard, the cold hearth, the bed of sacking, the gnawing pangs, the famine faintness, the slow, long, cruel hours that creep on from dawn to dark, from dark to dawn again, and bring no friend, no food, no hope, no rescue.

These all faced Annunziata in her future: that poor little sorrowful future that stood between her and her grave; so short in years as it must be, so long in misery as it would be.

Rheumatism racked her bones, and she knew that soon she would be bedridden, and then—well—the people gave to her when they saw her cheery face and her empty basket, but when she lay in her bed, and they saw her no more, they would forget.

They would none of them come to her, any more than they would go to her tomb, when it should be made, a mere nameless hole under the rank grass of the common burying-ground.

The world does not take into account people who have nothing. They should be provident in their youth, and save money even if they have not enough to hold body and soul together, and never enough to satisfy hunger!

They should save money.

Stentorello is the type of the Italian on the stage, and the people in truth are perhaps too miserly and fond of gain; but is there much wonder at that in this country? There is no poor rate, and no workhouse, and nothing for the honest poor except a metre or so of ground in the cemeteries.

That is not a prospect to strengthen bare arms in the battle of life, or moisten parched lips dry with toil. The dead wasp is thought of by its kind, but the dead poor have no such remembrance from theirs.

Viola was watching for her as the diligence

rolled heavily into the piazza at Santa Rosalia. The girl sprang to her and looked in her face, and her own face fell at what she read there.

"They have refused you!" she cried.

"Yes, dear," said Annunziata with a quiver in her voice. "They think I am a beggar, and that I never am and never was, as you know, for I never ask aught; never, never! they give me what they like to give me, and I am thankful."

"When you have nothing, how can you help that?" said the girl, with a sob of indignation.

Annunziata bore up somehow or other against her lot and endured her hard pallet, her damp chamber, her dry atom of bread, because she still believed, against all witness to the contrary, that her God cared for her; that somehow or other when her soul should leave her little shrivelled, brown body, she would see the light of a gladder day than ever shone on earth.

She was an old woman, and had been bred up in the old faiths; faiths that were not clear indeed to her, nor ever reasoned on, but yet gave her consolation, and a great, if a vague, hope. Now that we tell the poor there is no such hope, that when they have worked and starved long enough, then they will perish altogether, like bits of candle that have burnt themselves out, that they are mere

machines made of carbon and hydrogen, which, when they have had due friction, will then crumble back into the dust; now that we tell them all this, and call this the spread of education, will they be as patient?

Will not they, too, since this short life is all, insist at any price of blood that it shall be made sweet and made strong for them?

Will they not seize by violence on violent drugs, and drink themselves drunk on the alcohol of communism?

Why should they not? Since there is nothing beyond this life, why should they toil that you and I may be at ease?

Take hope from the heart of man, and you make him a beast of prey.

The philosopher stands at his desk in the lecture hall, and demonstrates away the soul of man, and with exact thought measures out his atoms and resolves him back to gas and air. But the revolutionary, below in the crowd, hears, and only translates what he hears thus to his brethren: "Let us drink while we may; property is robbery; this life is all; let us kill and eat; there is no God."

The philosopher may cry to the winds, "Love virtue for its own sake."

The communist is more logical than he.

CHAPTER V.

MEANWHILE in the prison of Pomodoro, Carmelo, thanks rather to his youth than to his leech, recovered despite the bleeding, the camomel, the stench of foul drains, the diet, and the obscurity; in six weeks' time he was almost ready to go back to his prison cell; he looked but a shadow of himself; he was thin and pale, his eyes were moody, and cast downward; his ruddy, sun-tanned skin had grown pallid and yellow.

He had recovered, but he had a worse poison in him than even the poison of fever, for in the bed next to his there was lying a German with anemia and other ills, and this man talked to him in his own tongue by hours together in the long watches of the night, when they had no other companions than the newts and the rats and the beetles that ran over their couches. The German, a travelling mechanic, was a socialist and an internationalist; and into this ignorant virgin mind of Carmelo, all seething and fermenting now under an unendurable sense of wrong, he poured the black stream of his own beliefs and desires.

Carmelo did not understand a tithe part, but he understood enough, after many a night's colloquy, to breathe in eagerly this vengeance on society which looked like justice, this insanity for equality which looked like reason. Until wrong had been done to him he had been a perfectly contented lad, troubling himself about nothing outside his own duties and occupation, for scarcely knowing how to read, he knew nothing of any other world beyond that of the mill-house. He had been bred up to be respectful to the gentry and the clergy; to be decent and honest in life, and to be quite happy so long as his father was pleased with him. This had been always Carmelo, until that hapless hour when poor Toppa had been treacherously done to death.

But injustice and despotism change the pure blood of youth into a dark and sullen current. Carmelo who had only rightly punished a poisoner, was treated like a criminal and thrown amongst thieves and assassins.

One of the cruellest sins of any State, in giving petty and tyrannous authority into petty and tyrannous hands, is that it thus brings into hatred and disgust the true and high authority of moral law.

"Where is God? He cannot hear, He cannot care; nor can the saints, since He and they let me lie here and make a king of Bindo Terri," thought

Carmelo, lying on his bed, with all the bright and vigorous force of his young limbs gone out of them.

If they were indeed throned in heaven, as the priests always said, would they let the poor suffer, and the scoundrels thrive, and the fines be wrung out of starving bodies, and the parasite of the public torture and arraign and sentence honest winners of their daily bread?

Carmelo still shrank from the bold blasphemies of the socialistic doctrines; but the German was wary and skilful, he softened for this foolish young Christian the atheism of the texts he quoted upon all religions, and only recited again and again their condemnations of all existing laws, and their invitation to a perfect future, when there would be on all the earth "only free men in a free fraternity."

Carmelo listened, and his sick soul was seduced by the dangerous stimulant of these doctrines, whose greatest danger lies in the fact that there is in all their exaggeration an essential, an undeniable, truth.

He was at war with all the world, with all these unknown, unseen, forces which had been stronger than he; his ear and his heart were open to words that told him of the tyranny of property, of the favouritism of law, of the sins of society by which millions groaned in want, and died unpitied.

The German, exiled from his own country for

his opinions, was a keen and restless student and an ardent propagandist; he was a disciple of the most extreme creeds and deemed, as most of those men now do, all remedy useless save "pan-destruction."

Well aware that he was dying, and a prey at times to great agony, he beheld in the young Italian his last proselyte, and threw all the last energies of his waning life into the rescue, as he deemed it, of this dumb soul, into the effort to give light to the blind eyes of Carmelo, for he found that Carmelo was ignorance itself; thought heaven had placed the king upon the throne; thought heaven had made one set of men to toil, and another set to do nothing and enjoy; had a vague idea of the Government as of a sort of god hedged round with cannon; fancied the good weather and the bad came from divine pleasure or wrath, and was certain that grain would not come up unless the priest made the round of the fields and blessed them.

The autumn nights were long and cold; in the infirmary they were allowed no charcoal and no light, but the fiery utterances of the Internationalist lit up and warmed the darkness. Carmelo who knew naught that occurred outside the hedges of Santa Rosalia, listened as in his childish days he had listened to the priest's wonder-stories of S.

Ursula or SS. Cosmo and Damian, to the recital of the movement going secretly onward in Italy; of the insurrections of San Lupo, of Gallo, of Calatabiano; of the "Circoli Barsanti," and the section of the "Figli di Lavoro;" of the memorable words of Garibaldi in 1873, that were there a society of devils to combat despotism, he would join it; of the Internationalist federation of Rimini which decrees "the earth to who cultivates it, the machine to who uses it, the house to who builds it;" of the programme of Piacenza, "everyone has right to what is necessary, no one has right to what is superfluous;" of the declaration of the fraternity of Montenero, Antignani, Ardenza, and San-Jacopo that "the State is the negation of liberty; authority creates nothing and corrupts everything; change of government is useless; if a man have a thorn in his foot, it is of no use for him to change his boots, he must pluck out the thorn;" and, with these, of many a burning and bitter paragraph from the *Plebe* of Milan, from the *Petroleo* of Ferrara, from the *Proletario* of Turin, and the unhesitating dictate of the *Campana*, that "all authority, human and divine, shall perish and disappear, from God downward to the last agent of police."

The innocent soul of Carmelo revolted from these arguments which tore down his Christ from his

crucifix, and dashed his stoup of holy water to the ground; yet the wrong that festered in him made his mind open to all these dreams of freedom and of justice, all these promises of a millennium upon earth.

If such minds as Rousseau's, Fourier's, Proudhon's, Bakounine's, do not see the falsehood that is mingled with this truth, how shall Carmelo see it, or the like of Carmelo?

The Italian is, as I say, not by nature a revolutionary, but when he is one he goes beyond all others, because, perhaps, he has more than all others to suffer in the contrast between his dead hopes and his present misery. No one seems to remember that the Italian Socialists have rejected Marx and decreed Mazzini a reactionist, whilst they subscribe blindly and without change to all the terrible creed of Bakounine.

No one seems to remember this, or heed it; yet Bakounine's is a creed of nothing less than universal destruction. The disciples of it grow every day in numbers throughout Italy, but since the arrests of 1874, they call themselves by a harmless name* and so no one is afraid.

No one is afraid; and the State continues to

* Circoli per gli studi sociali.

give them justification by leaving in every commune the breed of Messer Nellemane and of Bindo Terri.

"It is a question of hunger," the Marquis Pepoli said once of the revolts of Budria and Molinella.

Perhaps partly: not altogether. But who makes the hunger? who keeps the stomachs empty, the hearths cold, the box of the commune full by fines?

The Municipalities.

Here is the thorn that must be pulled from the foot of Italy if the canker and fester of it are not to spread through the whole body.

Carmelo, of course, could not understand a hundredth part of what the German unfolded to him, but the vague meaning that he gleaned dazzled and awed him, and the poison of injustice already given him to drink had left him thirsty for this other poison of revenge.

Carmelo was a brave lad, a lad honest, clean-living, and harmless in thought and deed; he was dealt with as if he were a criminal, and the bitter sense of his wrongs made it precious to him to hear of sovereign rights that he shared with all mankind.

He had been dimly conscious of a right to live in his own way so long as he did no harm to his fellows; he had been by nature independent and of fearless spirit; but of late the petty tyrannies enfolding the lives of the poor had been to him like a

choking chain, and he had begun to tremble. He saw men impoverished, and hunted down to beggary, or death, by this thing which they called Law, and which he knew only to be extortion; and he had lost hope and manliness; and in the stead of these there had come on him a moody and morbid resentment, chilled with dread.

He was as ready for the tempting of his teacher, as clay is made moist for the hand and the wheel of the potter.

One night, when the moon was shining in through the grated hole that served as casement, the German mechanic died.

Carmelo was too feeble to rise; he sat up in his bed and saw the ghastly agony, and heard the death-rattle, of this man, who seemed to him his only friend. He strove to call for help, but his tongue clave to his mouth, and when at length he could find his trembling voice he shouted in vain; no one heard.

The horror of that hour aged him by many years.

He dragged his weak limbs out of bed and strove to hold the man in his convulsions, but death was stronger than he, and flung him backward rudely on his own mattress.

With the moonlight on his ghastly face the

German struggled with his doom, choking and vomiting blood. Once only, with consciousness in his eyes, he stared upward in the eyes of Carmelo.

"The people—the people—suffer," he muttered through his clenching teeth.

Then he gave a bitter cry and died.

Carmelo was alone through all the long chill night with the body of the dead man beside him.

CHAPTER VI.

AFTER her fruitless journey to Pomodoro, Annunziata could not get about at all, on account of snow that fell, and of a thaw that left the roads mere torrents of slush.

She had but little blood in her veins, and but little bread in her cupboard; she and the three other old souls huddled themselves together over a single *scaldino* of charcoal that they clubbed their pence to get, and spent most of their time in bed, in hope of so keeping their slow circulation from absolute stagnation. They were four miserable little pallet-beds, one in each corner, and the spiders and beetles and mice ran over them, and the old women were too feeble to chase them away.

Dom Lelio did all he could; and Viola went daily, and denied herself that she might keep her great-aunt from starving, but when all was done that could be by these two, Annunziata had but little of all that old age needs. Dom Lelio had but a franc a-day, and in Pippo's house want was a ghost that had no rest and gave none.

"They cannot call her a beggar now," said Viola

bitterly, as she stood beside the hard bed in which the old woman was stretched, with her legs useless from rheumatism.

The heart of the girl was sick with hope deferred, and that vague fear of something yet worse to come which a long succession of undeserved misfortunes will leave on the brightest nature.

It was now the end of February and the weather, as it often does here, grew colder by far than it had been when the days were short. The village was a sorry scene, the ill-made roads were little better than bogs, and the angry river went swirling and rushing, yellow and muddy with all the clay that it washed down from its treeless banks.

"One would say the Rosa were mad to think the *boschetto* is gone," thought the eldest girl Dina Pastorini, as the north wind, without that screen of trees, beat with all its might against the millhouse.

Her father had changed as greatly as Pippo.

He was never irritable, because he was a sweet-tempered and just man, who could not bear to farther afflict his children.

But all the honest mirth and cheery content were gone out of him; he who had been so loquacious and mirthful now never smiled and seldom spoke; his brow was always dark and his eyes were always dull. Missing that glad and pleasant shade, so

green through three of the seasons, that had been before his eyes ever since he had opened them at birth, seemed to him to have made him half-blind.

Besides, he was always saying in his thoughts: "How shall we tell Carmelo? how will he bear it when he sees?" Carmelo, who beyond them all had loved the bright *boschetto*, and had passed so many a holiday hour sitting on the mossy edge of it with his square net floating on the stream below, and white Toppa sleeping by his side or hunting lizards in the flower-filled grass.

The father dared not think of it. He had suffered greatly himself, but he feared that his son would suffer yet more.

As for such solace as might have come to a man struggling with many burdens from the help of money, none was given to him. The municipality had offered a certain sum of money indeed for the riverside wood, but they had not paid it. In Rome they were five years paying for the Farnesina gardens, destroying them, as it were, on credit; in Santa Rosalia they would probably be twice as long paying the miller.

If he wanted to make them pay he would have to go to law with them, and that no one of the class that the Pastorini belonged to would ever dare

to do, knowing the remedy to be worse than the disease. The Giunta was supposed to deal with these matters, but in reality it only met to give adhesion to what Cavaliere Durellazzo said, and what he said was what he had been prompted to say by his right hand and chief counsellor, Messer Nellemane.

Now, as everyone will understand without saying, they could scarcely be expected to find money for Demetrio Pastorini, since they were obliged to pay beforehand all those gentlemen who had opposed the tramway.

So the miller's empty pockets were not the heavier by a coin at the present for the expropriation of his wood, and he suffered in a time of peace and, as the foreign newspapers had it, of prosperity, precisely what he would have suffered had an invading army encamped in Vezzaja and Ghiralda and burned it right and left on leaving it.

"Ah, my girl," he said once to Viola, of whom he had grown fond in their mutual trials, "I almost would sooner our dear lad stayed on in prison than that he should come home to see what he will see."

Viola sighed heavily, and did not say that she felt otherwise, only in her young heart there was that hope which is in youth like the golden gorse,

always in bloom, even in bad weather and on barren soil.

She thought always: "When Carmelo comes home things will change; all will be well."

It was now the close of February; she was counting the weeks, the days, the hours till Carmelo's release.

She could not read much, but she had one of those little calendars which are the oracles of the poor, and she could make out their signs and the days of the months, and in this she had marked each cruel week as it crawled by and left her lover shut in prison walls.

There were only two months more now to divide them, and though Carmelo truly would return to trouble and pain, she could not, like his father, wish him absent.

Yet so many sorrows fell upon them, that the bit of charcoal with which she marked evil days in her calendar had made almost every page a smudge of black.

Early in the year her grandfather had received a long and formal printed paper, calling on him to remove the nuisance of the water before his door. Pippo had crammed the thing on to the top of the live cinders in the *brascie* bowl, and there had let it smoulder into ashes.

A few days later Pierino Zaffi had been seen about the place, examining the little spring and measuring it, and in the name of the commune had entered the house and traced the offending water to its source amongst the frozen orto ground. He had said nothing and had gone.

In a week's time there had come another document, and that Viola took to Cecco to read, her grandfather being absent at the time.

This one ordered Filippo Mazzetti forthwith to execute works that would direct his spring underground; to cover it was forbidden, because no means by which it could be covered would fail to obstruct the public path.

He was ordered to commence this work within thirty days; if delayed, the offender would be fined for every day's delay.

The spectacles rose on Cecco's nose, and the hair upon his head as he read, and his face grew aghast with horror.

"After all that money that I paid for Pippo," he gasped; "after that bit of paper which set him free of all!"

He who was disposed to revere and obey the law was paralysed with terror.

Was this its justice? this the way it kept its troth with men?

Cecco gave up faith in humanity, and almost abandoned faith in heaven.

Viola was crying bitterly.

"What does it mean?" gasped Cecco wildly. "What does it mean? Can your grandfather pay masons and plumbers for six months like a duke?"

"It means ruin!" sobbed the girl. "He has nothing in the world; how can he put the water under the earth? And Carmelo coming home in a month!"

Of this new calamity they were compelled to tell Pippo. He heard quite quietly, but there was a savage wild light in his eye.

He stretched his hand out and took the paper and folded it up once, twice, thrice; then he held it in the palm of his hand and spat on it; then he lighted a lucifer match and set fire to it.

It blazed a moment, then curled up, and became a little heap of black ash on the stones of the floor.

He stayed Viola and Cecco with a gesture as they would have spoken.

"Never a word," he said, "never a word. If they send me a hundred such, so will I treat them all. They cannot get blood out of a post. Let them do their worst—"

"But"—his friend began.

"Not a word," said Pippo, and he spat on the ashes.

Then he went on with his work.

Half an hour later he looked up from his weaving, and his eyes were shining savagely from under his white hair.

"Girl," he said to his granddaughter, "I call to mind a night before you were born. There came news of a great battle; they called it San Martino.* They told us to light up; so did we all. In your little window I set the oil flaming. They said we were free—God have mercy on us for being fools!"

Then he went on plaiting his osiers.

The girl wept.

* Solferino is so called by the Italians.

CHAPTER VII.

A LITTLE while after that, there came a hue and cry of mad dogs in Santa Rosalia. These cries are very common. They bring in plenty of dog skins for the guards to sell.

If any dog be hunted by boys, be thirsty for water he cannot find, or be gaunt or faint from hunger and ill-treatment, straightway is he declared *arrabiato*, and up on the walls there appear placards that every dog seen about will be killed. Then Bindo, with his poisoned polpetti and his pistol, is busy and happy all over the land.

A woman was bitten the other day by one of these mad dogs, and was recovered by the bone of a saint being laid by her pillow, but present municipalities are not desirous to bring out the virtues of saints, and they do like to sell the skins of dogs; so they scream at every possible wag of a tail or sign of a growl, and fly to poison and to pistols.

Such a panic seized the municipality of Vezzaja and Ghiralda in this month of February, when

Pippo was being summoned again and again for little Raggi and putting the summons in the fire.

If you tunnel a mountain and stifle a score of men you are a public benefactor; if you keep a factory, in which no one lives over thirty years of age from the noxious dust or noxious gas inhaled in the work, no one finds human life at all too precious for you to use up as you like in your own interests; but if ever a dog snap at somebody—ah! then of what sanctity is human life! what horror is anything that menaces it!

Messer Nellemane, in the absence of Cavaliere Durellazzo, who was at his candle-warehouses, took fright now, nothing loth to do so, and had placards stuck up, announcing that the guards were authorised to destroy every dog they saw loose.

The dullest imagination can conjecture the "lovely time" that Bindo and Angelo had in the commune, and no one dared to check their slaughtering hand, remembering the fate that had befallen Carmelo.

Viola, terrified, kept little Raggi in the house, and shut her up in the orto, and kept her out of danger all she could, and at night would start up and feel for the little floss silk curls of the dog as it lay at the foot of her bed, waking from a dream that Raggi had been seized and killed.

"I said the dog should never be kept in for those devils," growled her grandfather: but the girl pleaded to him that her trouble was for Raggi's own sake.

The old man let her do as she would; he was growing apathetic, yet desperate; though he had burned the Giunta's order about his brook, the memory of it and the dread of what they might do to him haunted him night and day. And he was so very poor; he did not so much mind depriving himself of wine and tobacco, but it hurt him terribly to see Viola's clothes mended till they were but patchwork, and her feet going bare.

Viola had always been the neatest and cleanest as well as the comeliest maiden in the province. Clean she was still, but neat you cannot be when you are so very poor that even to buy a few pins, a little thread, a bit of tape, is quite beyond your means.

This is the poverty that the world does not understand, and, not apprehending, does not pity; famine it understands, the famine that desolates Cashmere and Bombay, but not the poverty which can just put enough in the body to keep life alive uncomplainingly, but has not a coin beyond for any need or pleasure of life.

It was a great sorrow, too, to Viola not to be

able to be decently dressed for mass as she had used to be; but she did not think so much of that as she did of her inability to give her grandfather a scrap or two of meat in his broth and her equal powerlessness to defend Raggi.

At Christmas she had sold her little string of seed pearls to a richer maiden, the big butcher's daughter, and the money they had fetched had long since gone in charcoal and bread for themselves and soup for Annunziata. Money runs away so fast when it has no companions in your drawer.

One morning whilst the placards concerning dogs were still upon the walls, and the reign of terror still dominated all Vezzaja and Ghiralda, Viola had her week's washing to do. She needed not to go for this, as most had to do, to the edge of the river, or to the springs on the hillsides, because the brook that offended the Giunta filled a tank in their own little garden.

There she washed the sheets and shirts and other linen that she and Pippo used, and washed her great-aunt's linen, too, if such poor little rags can be dignified by the name; and she was at this work all the chilly forenoon with the bitter north wind whistling round her head and nipping the red flowers of the almond trees near her.

She had shut the house door, and Raggi was

with her running loose about the little place; Pippo was out trying to get an order for skips or baskets or the osier-covers of wine-flasks.

Viola looked often for the little dog and saw it lying out of the wind under the wall, but about eleven o'clock, having wrung out her linen, she was so busied hanging it up on the clothes' line, tied to the delicate almond trees, that she never heard the wind blow open the entrance door, and when her work was done at noon she missed Raggi.

The little dog never left her side usually, but Raggi had a little friend in Cecco's youngest boy, a gentle mite of four years old, a cripple with a cherub's face and curling golden hair.

Whenever Raggi heard the tic-tac of the poor little man's crutch, she always trotted out to it, for Lillo, as they called the child, would share his bread and milk with her, and throw his little wooden ball to please her, and loved her dearly. Raggi—perhaps with that divine pity which dogs have—divined the sad destiny of crippled Lillo, and so gave him her preference.

This forenoon she heard the sound of the crutch on the stones of the threshold, and got up and went to it, not knowing she was doing any harm.

Lillo, delighted to see his playmate, covered her with kisses and hobbled along to his father's

house, and there got a bit of bread; and hobbled farther with the dog by his side out to the few willows that there fringed the river bank, and sat down in the sun and shared his bread with her.

Lillo and Raggi were very merry, indeed, about nothing; seeking stones in the grass, making a feast of the crust, and playing with the dry twigs that the wind scattered so plentifully. Raggi's yellow curls blew, and Lillo's blew, too, and the one barked, and the other sang and laughed, and both were as happy as two little mortals could be, with that sweetest of all happiness which is born out of nothing beyond the mere glad sense of living.

But along the road by the river there came a grim shadow; the shadow of a man in grey clothes, with a feather in his hat and a sword by his side.

His eyes flashed over the little child and the little dog sitting together under the willows, and his ear caught the sound of that quick little bark, that gay little laugh.

He drew his pistol and shot the dog.

As the dog dropped on its side the child fell backward, screaming violently.

People ran out from their houses, and Bindo Terri walked away as one who has done his duty and earned his wage.

Viola had run out with the rest; she fell on her knees by Raggi.

Blood was pouring from its mouth, but it moved its little curly tail feebly in welcome and farewell. Then the little bright eyes glazed and seemed to sink into its head, its heart beat convulsively through a few seconds more, it stretched its limbs out feebly, and then was still for ever.

It lay dead in a pool of its own blood.

Never more would Lillo laugh under the willows, and break his bread with Raggi. Never more would Raggi dance to the children's piping. And little Lillo, never very wise, was imbecile from that hour; a frightened, cowering, mindless thing.

But what mattered that? The law had asserted its majesty and vindicated its rights.

When the old man Pippo dug a small grave under the blossoming almond-trees, and laid the blood-stained body of the little dog in it, covered with moss and grass, he groaned as he turned each sod.

"Assassins and thieves are set above us, and work their wicked will, and no one cares. How long, O Lord? how long?"

CHAPTER VIII.

As by a very irony and wantonness of cruelty, that very night there was left at his house by the usciere a mandate from the court of Pomodoro to pay the sum of fifty-seven francs on account of the little dog.

As he had neglected to answer the summons for contravention, the charges against him for contumacy had been taken as usual to the senior court, and had been proved and assessed against him with costs.

Two francs for every time that poor little Raggi had been seen loose soon told up to a high sum total, and the public accuser who officiates for the commune on such occasions had stated that, but for the mercifulness of that administration, the number of summonses would have been much greater. They regretted, they said, to be severe on a poor man, but the law must be respected. The law must be respected, said all the officials in a chorus.

That document, like the others, found the fire.

"They may kill me as they killed the little

dog," said Pippo; "'twould be less trouble, and done once for all."

Viola was weeping as though her tears would, to use Dante's words, destroy her very heart; and in the cooper's house a sad mother sat by a little bed where a golden-headed child, with vacant, terrified eyes, was pointing for ever in the air, and stammering uncouth, shapeless sounds, and then shivering as though with ague, and cowering down under the clothes.

Bright-haired Lillo's body lived, but his mind was as dead as Raggi's, buried in her grave underneath the almonds.

"Carmelo must not know," said Viola over and over again in the darkness of the night, sobbing and missing her little furry friend, who for seven years had slept upon her bed; and when the morning dawned she begged of Lillo's mother and father and of all about the house, that never would they let Carmelo know that Raggi had been killed by Bindo Terri, and the child thus lost his wits from terror.

All promised her, but she could not be sure that the promise would be kept, for she knew how every little story leaks from the dry cask of empty heads, and she was afraid, terribly afraid. Sometimes she

thought that she would lose her brain, like little timid Lillo.

Her father, too, was for ever saying, "Let them kill me as they have killed the dog. They have made me a beggar."

The cold was passing away. The damp was drying up, the corn lands were green with young wheat, and soon amidst the grass the violets were giving place to the daffodils, and on the hill-sides the peach-trees and pear-trees were throwing out their sprays of blossom, making the steep slopes beautiful.

But spring brought no joy to the small house of the Madonna; and by the mill upon the river, in lieu of lovely pillars of lightest green, thickening and deepening with every day, in lieu of that leafy screen, full of the nests of doves and merles and nightingales, there was a waste land of mud and shingle, a barren spot, of no use or good to man or beast or bird.

Nothing had been done with it. The holes yawned where the trees had been uprooted, and the water-beetles crawled undisturbed over the heaps of mud. The tramway was not made; the foreign speculators and the home municipalities were quarrelling, and until their quarrels were ended the work could not be begun. The speculators said the

municipalities had cheated, and the municipalities gave the speculators a *tu-quoque*. It was a quarrel like a croupier's and a gamester's.

Of all these things the population of the commune understood nothing; they were like a horse who has his mane docked and his chin singed; he feels uncomfortable, but he does not know what is done to him.

Italy is always being docked and singed; being amiable, she does not kick her groom, but she is always smarting, and the flies are always raising gall upon her loins.

The sweet spring came; and so sweet is it, here, that it is joy enough to live only to go out into the fields all laden with blossom, and feel your heart dance with the daffodils in the full sense of Wordsworth's words.

But the poor have not leisure for this, nor have they insight for it, and the spring brought no solace to Santa Rosalia.

Another trouble, and a yet greater anxiety, fell on Demetrio Pastorini at this time.

There was another miller on the other side of the village, who had never done very much work, because the water was so much shallower there, and who indeed did not care about it, being a very well-to-do man, owning an oil-shop and warehouse

in Pomodoro. His name was Remigio Rossi; he had never been looked on at all as a rival by Carmelo's family, and did not seek to be one.

But one fine day four oxen appeared on the river-edge, dragging a huge, black, shapeless, uncouth-looking object behind them; and a few days later, Pippo and Viola, looking out of their house door, saw a long black chimney, and a cone of black smoke, coming out of the roof of Remigio's mill, which was within ten yards of them.

Pippo ran and shouted with all his might that the place was a-fire, but people standing on the bank, looking on, said to him,

"Be still, you, for an old fool; that is the new machine a-grinding."

Demetrio Pastorini, who was a home-biding man, and never went to public-houses of any kind for gossip, and so never heard anything that was going on until a dozen days after all Santa Rosalia knew it, saw this black thing spitting smoke, and heard all at a blow, as it were, that the miller Remigio Rossi had obtained a steam-engine from the city, by means of which he could grind grain in fair weather or foul, and snap his finger and thumb at all shallow waters.

The steam-mill was a hideous blot on the landscape, and its ugly iron chimney vomited filthy

odours and darkening vapours over all the green country and glancing waters, and made a mass of ash and cinders and general blackness and sootiness all about the pretty grass bank on which the building stood.

The engines were set going with plenty of last year's grain, by favour of the Cavaliere Durellazzo; and hearing their whirring and booming, and seeing the heavy veil of its smoke, the elder Pastorini turned away, "death in his heart," for hope was for ever gone out of him.

How could he wrestle against this thing? he with his mill wheels high and dry, for five months out of the year, since the woods had been cut on the banks?

"So you bring devils of fire and iron to ruin your old neighbour, Remigio?" he said reproachfully when he met him at mass on the Sunday.

Remigio, who was a good-natured man, though, like most of them, he loved money too well, looked sheepishly.

"I do not wish to injure anybody," he said, with some embarrassment. "But one was sorely wanted now the Rosa is such a captious thing; and as the Giunta find half the cost, it being for the good of the place——"

"Oh, the Giunta find half the money, do they?"

said Pastorini, with his heart sinking heavier and heavier. "And I suppose they will take half the profits too?"

Remigio winked, then shuffled into church.

The next day Pastorini, who was by no means behind the scenes in these matters, went and asked innocently for an audience with the Cavaliere Durellazzo: it was the syndic's day for audiences.

As usual, the Cavaliere Durellazzo was absent; but his secretary would see anyone. After a little delay the miller found himself in the presence of Messer Nellemane, who smiled affably, and, without rising from his writing chair, said, "Can I be of any use to you, my friend?"

Then Demetrio Pastorini, not being glib of tongue, except under pressure of excitement, with some hesitation, and with great repetition and amplification, related the object of his coming, and set forth the fact that his people had been millers on the Rosa water over three hundred years, well counted and proved, and very likely many more; and then he proceeded to urge that having thus a kind of inherited fief and ancestral right as it were in the stream, it was beyond all justice, not to say all law, to have a steam mill set up in face of him.

Messer Nellemane listened very patiently; and

when at last the miller paused for want of breath, said gently:

"You are under an entire misapprehension, my friend. Did not Remigio Rossi occupy the mill by the piazza for very many years?"

Pastorini admitted the fact.

"And you never, that I heard of, objected to that water mill being there?"

"It did no business," said the miller.

"Excuse me," said Messer Nellemane, "that is quite beside the question. If it had done, you could not have thought of compelling its removal?"

"I never should have asked it," said Pastorini. "Live and let live is my motto. That mill was an honest thing. It worked by water; and it was in worse water than I was——"

Messer Nellemane grew a trifle impatient; the obtuseness of the public always irritated him; but he kept his serene smile.

"All that is beyond the question. You contest the legality of Rossi's mill. Now, whether it be a water mill or a steam mill, it has, or it has not, the same rights to the ground it stands upon: you do not seem to me to see that; yet, if you reflect a moment, dear sir, you will be persuaded that the manner of working the mill has nothing at all to do with the matter."

"Merciful heaven!" cried Pastorini, goaded into torture by this mild and logical reasoning. "It has everything to do with it. The mill had the same rights as mine—no less; no more. When Rossi was content with the seasons God sent, and the whim of the Rosa, I had nothing to say: the river is free."

"A moment ago you claimed it as the property of your family," said his listener very gently: the miller did not heed.

"Fair contest I would never be a foe to, nor would any son of mine," he said, a little hotly. "Come rich, come poor, the river is free; a prince and a beggar may strip and sport in it——"

"More pity," said Messer Nellemane, whose propriety was often offended by little, live, dancing *amorini* bent on a bath in the heat of midsummer.

"The river's a free thing; but use it fair," said the miller growing heated. "Don't put a hissing boiler on it, and grind, when it's God's will that the water's out; why do you come on the river to do that? it's like the men I've heard of that blow fish out of the waters with gunpowder, and rob all honest anglers with their nets and rods."

"Dynamite," corrected Messer Nellemane. "It is not allowed by our rules."

"Then why do you allow the steam mill?" pursued Pastorini. It's to me what the blasting is to the fishers. One man will gorge, and all the others starve. I never said I had a right to the Rosa; but I do say I have a right to grind grain for Santa Rosalia and all the farms around. This thing isn't fair; it isn't honest; it will eat me up, and make my children hunger; for, of course all the folks will go where the work is done quickest."

"You have precisely expressed the reason of its invention," said Messer Nellemane blandly, and toying with a pen. "In these times work, to please the public, must be done quickly, and done at any moment. It is most painful to me that this innovation should be displeasing to you; but we are compelled to think of the general interest, not of individual aims. It is absurd that, in these times of great inventions, a whole commune should have to wait with its harvests unground because a little river has run dry; so many complaints have been made on this subject to us that we have deemed ourselves bound to find some remedy for them, and as Remigio Rossi was a public-spirited man with some capital, the most excellent the Cavaliere Durellazzo and the Giunta decided on giving him some help to the better carrying out of this project."

Pastorini stood confounded and dumb. He had intended to cast the loan for the steam mill in the face of this representative of the municipality; but lo! it was boasted of to him as an act of public utility and benignity!

His slow gentle wits were not quick enough or keen enough to combat those of Messer Nellemane.

He stood turning his straw hat in his hands, and stammering stupidly: "But the thing's not honest. It's not fair. It is to be beat by devils——" till his auditor amiably reminded him that time was precious, and that there were many persons awaiting audience below.

"Can I do nothing then?" said the miller, staring blindly about him.

"Nothing in this matter. When the Giunta has once given its approbation——"

"Damn the Giunta, and damn you!" said Demetrio Pastorini bitterly. "You have thrown my poor lad in prison, and you will now take the bread out of our mouths."

Messer Nellemane rang a little bell, and Bindo Terri appeared, and showed the miller the door.

"All that family is a little amiss here," said Messer Nellemane, touching his own forehead with a commiserating smile.

CHAPTER IX.

THE miller went to a lawyer in Pomodoro; and the lawyer told him he could do nothing; he could perhaps petition the Prefect.

So Pastorini bade him, in mercy's name, draw up the petition, which was done, and cost forty francs.

The Prefect's secretary read it, and referred it to the Consiglio Provinciale; the Consiglio Provinciale referred it to their engineer, who was the engineer of the commune, one Pierino Zaffi. He informed the Consiglio Provinciale that the mill was necessary, not insalubrious, and very advantageous to the commune; the Consiglio Provinciale said so in turn to the Prefect, and he certified that he could not go against the decision of the provincial council.

In such a circle does the poor mill horse of the public turn.

Nothing was to be done.

Pastorini knew very well that Ruin would soon look over his white garden gate.

The steam-mill would take all his custom away,

and now that the trees were felled, the water would most likely be shallower, and sooner shallow, every summer. Besides the Pastorini felt themselves growing friendless: for the first time for many years the big butcher had been asked to direct the procession of Corpus Domini instead of the miller; people were cool where they had been cordial. Without more selfishness than is common to human nature, Santa Rosalia felt that it was perilous to be good friends with a family so marked out for punishment by Providence and Messer Nellemane.

"A tin-kettle threshing the corn, and an iron pot grinding of it! Oh Lord what times!" said old Pippo, as the mill smoke came in through his window and smothered him in his bed.

Messer Nellemane was in good and affable spirits; all things were going well with him. The new deputy, not unmindful of the tampering that had gone on with the election lists, and the plurality of voting achieved by the gendarmerie, and other signal services to the State, in which the secretary of Santa Rosalia had been of no small use, both in invention and execution, was more than cordial to his humble ally, and predicted all manner of great things for the future of so intelligent a public servant.

"In a free country like this," said Signore Luca

Finti, "industry and talent can never long fail to obtain recognition. When these miscreants are out of office, and our turn of power comes, you will not be forgotten, my dear friend."

And Messer Nellemane was so clever that the Prefect of the province, who had been put in his place by the miscreants, also commended him for his discretion and zeal in certain things that had been convenient to the Prefecture in those elections, and the sub-Prefect said to him:

"So long as we are in power, you, I promise, shall not be forgotten. Such servants of the State as yourself are quite invaluable in these times when we have so much to fear from the Reactionary and Clerical element, and yet on the other hand must avoid being swamped by the deluge of Communism."

Messer Nellemane said earnestly that he had no feeling except of horror either for Clericalism or Communism.

He thought the good of the State required the strictest moderation and impartiality, and, as he said it very truthfully, he felt quite safe whether the Ministry went out or in, and especially as the new deputy and the sub-prefect would never compare notes because they abhorred each other as only Ministerialists and Dissidenti can.

Messer Nellemane's Utopia was like that of most Liberals of the present era; it was a neat cut-and-dried despotism, which should call itself a democracy, and in which the people should have as little voice as the nobles, and the church be only permitted to exist if it became a school-house for the semination of State doctrines.

This Liberalism keeps one eye on Gambetta and the other on Bismarck, and is so absorbed in these two, and in trying to combine an imitation of both, that it never sees coming after it with seven-leagued strides the avenger—Bakounine.

CHAPTER X.

It was the day for Carmelo to come out of prison; it was a lovely May morning, as May is lovely in this land alone.

Plentiful rains had fallen in the night; the tall, green-waving wheat, the mulberry and walnut trees, the willows along the river, the moss-grown grass between the poplars, all were green and sparkling with moisture; here and there an acacia rose up in blossom like the white column of a fountain, here and there glowed a Judas (*cercis siliquastrum*), with

the roseate blush of its abundant flowers; over all was blowing a sweet sea wind from the west.

Demetrio Pastorini said to the maiden:

"Alas! that he should come home to see what he will see!—"

"He will see us all well," said Viola, with a true woman's belief that this must compensate for all.

"The lad is sorely changed," said the father with a sigh; "remember that, Viola. When wrong is done to a man it changes the honey of the human heart to gall. He is no more the bright, soft, innocent youth that you and we have loved. He will need much wisdom from you, and much consolation."

"I will try my best," said the girl, "I will try to win him back to his old self, and teach him to forget."

"That is not easy," said Pastorini; "when the mildew is on the grain, who shall make it fair wheat again? And he comes to two sore troubled households. But he is young and you are good."

"I love him dearly," said Viola, with tears in her large eyes.

"That I know," said his father.

Then he kissed her, and got ready the grey mare, and Dina walked back with her to her own little house while the men went on their way.

"That young Pastorini will be out of prison to-day," Messer Nellemane was saying at that moment to the brigadier; "you will keep him under your eye, for I think he is a dangerous character."

"Of course," said the gendarme.

Once in prison, you are for ever down in the books of the police, and subject to examination and interrogation at any word or act that seems to them to be suspicious. You never wholly escape. You are as a bird let loose, and flying with a recall-thread tied to its foot. Human justice is a sadly deficient thing.

Pippo and the Pastorini, father and sons, went to Pomodoro to meet him; Viola stayed in her house; there is enough of the old sentiment amongst the people, still, to make them think women should not parade their persons, or their affections, or meddle with public things.

When they greeted Carmelo, and the formalities were fulfilled that set him free, he grasped his father's hand and Pippo's, but said never a word. He walked out into the open air, into the broad sunlight, with an uncertain step as if he were purblind; his face had a stupid look, and his mouth, that had been so fresh and smiling, was pale and sullenly compressed. All his youth seemed to have gone out of him; he was wasted and thin, and his

clothes hung on him loosely, twice too large. Only twelve months before he had borne the Maggio so merrily with carol and chant!

"You have had a long time of it," said the Usciere jocosely to him. "You will take good care how you touch a guard again, *birricchino mio*."

Carmelo looked on the ground; there was a fierce fire in his eyes; he kept a sullen silence.

"My son has been cruelly wronged," said the elder Pastorini with tears in his voice. "If there were any justice in the land, not an hour would he have spent in your accursed place."

"The law never wrongs anyone," said the Usciere, who lived by the law.

"The real good honest law perhaps does not," said Pastorini, "but these rogues who make laws out of their own heads that they may fill their pockets—"

"Hush! or they will lock you up," whispered Pippo, who ever since he had mortgaged his house had been timid and yet sullen. "Let us be going; there is Viola at home."

At the maiden's name a momentary light passed over Carmelo's face and into his heavy eyes; but it soon faded and left again unillumined the sullen gloom that months of imprisonment had brought there.

"Let us go," he said, and glanced back over his shoulder with a shudder at the prison.

They had brought the mill-horse and cart to meet him, and he felt a sob rise in his throat as he saw the familiar old grey beast, and heard the whinny of pleasure with which the poor thing recognised him.

Their hearts were rather heavy than joyful as they drove behind the grey along the dusty road, with the vineyards on either side of them, and the long low azure forms of the mountains beyond those.

The father felt a bitter pang that one of his sons should go back thus to his birth-place; his name had always been stainless, and though he knew that Carmelo had done no wrong, still in all prisons there is a taint of shame that clings.

The young man never spoke; his brother had the reins; he sat behind with old Pippo, his face turned backward, so that he saw the red roofs and dusky towers of Pomodoro grow less and less, until the rise of the road hid them.

"Accursed place! accursed place!" he muttered once; then his head dropped on his breast, and his lips never unclosed till the cart had jolted over a bridge that crossed the winding Rosa and entered his village. Then he put his hand on his

brother's arm, and motioned him to check the horse.

"Let me get down; let me see her alone."

They let him get down.

He stood an instant, and looked at the white, square, bald building that was the Palazzo Comunale. He looked and lifted his hand in the air.

"I would do the same again were the time to come again!" he said solemnly. "My poor dead dog! do they think the prison has made me forget you—or forgive them?"

His face was very pale and very stern; his eyes had a great darkness and yet a great fire in them, as the skies have when behind the purple rain-clouds flash the lightnings.

The men in the cart were afraid.

"He is not in his right mind," said Pippo in a frightened voice to his father.

Pastorini shook his head.

"Let him go to the girl. She will be his best cure. We should but do him harm. You will bring them both up to us a little later, when he is calm. He is sorely changed, my lad, my poor lad!"

It was early morning; no one saw Carmelo return. He went across the threshold of the house

of the Madonna, and fell at the feet of Viola, who watched and prayed for him.

His father followed him wistfully with his eyes, shading his own with his hand.

"What will he say of the trees?" he cried in a sort of despair. "I have not broken it to him. What will he say? what will he say!"

Pippo answered nothing: he thought the trees but a trivial woe beside his own dead weight of ruin; but he would not say so; he had a kind heart, which was awake, though his head was failing.

The miller drove on slowly through the village; and Pippo slipped down and glided away by himself, and sat down by the riverside under the willows by the reeds.

It was early, and no one scarcely had seen the miller's cart come through the village, and those who had seen, had kept behind their door-posts and their casements, saying to themselves, "Will it be prudent to be friends with the lad?"

For whosoever would be friends with the liberated criminal, the whole borgo knew well, would be marked and cashiered in the black books of the *oppressor rusticorum*. Their hearts were altogether with Carmelo; he had done thoroughly right, so they all thought, but who would dare to say so, or dare to act as if he thought so?

In these modern times of cowardice, when great Ministers dare not say the thing they think, and high magistrates stoop to execute decrees that they abhor, it is scarcely to be hoped for that moral courage will be a plant of very sturdy growth in the souls of carpenters and coopers, and bakers and plumbers and day-labourers, who toil for scarce a shilling a day. A bad name with the guards, a series of fines and taxes, the loss of municipal work or gentlemen's patronage—these soon ruin a poor tradesman or workman.

So we will not be too harsh against the little folk of Santa Rosalia that they hung back somewhat, and were not quick to look out of their doors as usual when the miller's well-known grey horse trotted slowly through the street.

Only Gigi Canterelli ran out of his shop and waved his hat, and shouted, "*Bravo! benone!*" and fearful Cecco, who was standing at the entrance of his workshop, having no work to do, seeing Pippo sitting disconsolate amidst the rushes, ran to him and cried, "Dear friend! Is he home? Oh the joy of it! Never mind the gaol now; never mind it a bit; everybody knows the rights of the tale!"

And when Pippo, who did not think it right to leave the youth and the maiden together more than ten minutes, got up to go into his house, Cecco

would go with him, and shook the hands of Carmelo, and kissed him on both cheeks, and said, "Now you are home all will go well," and then kissed Viola and went on his knees before the crucifix and blessed Christ, and got up again, and laughed and cried, and sang and danced, and behaved altogether so foolishly for a staid old cooper of sixty years, that Pippo could not help laughing too, and the young man and maiden were glad of this cover to their own too great emotion.

"Let us go," said Pippo, "your father will be wondering——"

Carmelo, with Viola's hand in his, looked more as he had used to look; his eyes had a soft and tearful light, and his lips had something of their old smile on them. He spoke but little: even for her he had few words.

But when Pippo said to him that it was time they should be going to the mill, and thereon the three went out from the house into the piazza, the harder, darker look came once more upon his face, and his eyes grew fierce as he strode through the dust with his head erect as if in challenge.

"I could kill them all!" he muttered, and his hand clenched hard on the hand of Viola.

As they went across the threshold, Carmelo looked over his shoulder:

"Where is little Raggi? She always jumped about me so."

And he began to call and whistle for her as of yore.

Viola burst out crying and caught hold of his arm.

"Oh Carmelo! oh, dear one, don't do that! Raggi is dead."

"Dead! what did she die of? Poor pretty merry Raggi!"

"She died of—of—old age," said Viola between her sobs; "don't talk of her, please don't."

"Of old age?" said Carmelo doubtingly; "She was not a pup, to be sure, but she was so full of pranks and play. Poor little Raggi! Are you sure it was not poison?"

His face grew overcast again, and the gloom of it did not lighten as he moved into the street and saw the neighbours hurry inside their doorways.

"One would say I brought the plague," he said savagely.

"Come on, never mind them. They are afraid the guards are looking, that is all. It will all be again just as it used to be when you shall have been home a week," said the cooper hurriedly, and they passed across the square.

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It was now the hour when all Santa Rosalia was up and doing; when every door was open, and every window unshuttered, when the children were trotting to school, and the mothers gossiping as they made their small purchases for dinner at noon. But now the women hustled away into holes and corners, and the men became suddenly very busy with casks or barrels, with brushes or pails, with meat or flour, with a mule in a cart, or an ox at a butcher's door, with anything and everything so that no one saw Carmelo.

He raised his head higher, and his eyes grew sterner and fiercer: he knew very well why these lazy laughter-loving people were all so suddenly busy and engrossed.

There was only Gigi Canterelli who ran once more out of his shop door and welcomed him with both hands.

"The beasts of the Municipality will never sup or dine in my back room any more," thought he, "but what matter—they must ruin me if they wish; I cannot let the good lad go by without a greeting."

But his was the only greeting that welcomed Carmelo in all the length of the village street, though women and men both looked wistfully after him and said one to another: "Poor lad, he was in the right;

will it do to be friends with him, think you? God knows he is good as gold."

He understood what they were thinking, and so did his companions.

"Oh, the shame of them! the cruelty of them!" thought Viola, trying not to let her tears fall. "Instead of giving him welcome and sympathy!"

"Men and women are just like sheep," thought her father. "A crack of the whip and they scatter: they never stay by one that falls on the road."

"It is not to be expected that they will get into trouble for the lad," thought Cecco; "and yet one would have fancied they would just have given him good day."

Now on the steps of the Palazzo Communale there was lounging Bindo, in his guard's uniform, with his short sword swinging at his side, and his big memorandum book bulging out of his pocket; his hat was cocked on one side, and his moustaches were curled up to his eyes, and he looked very much as if he had stepped off the stage from taking part in an opera bouffe.

He saw the four persons coming past the building on their way from Pippo's house to the mill on the Rosa. He said to a carabinieri who was also at the doorway, "Come along with me, there is that blackguard out of prison."

He swaggered down the steps and stood in the middle of the road so that they were obliged to pass him.

The face of Carmelo grew crimson and then livid as he saw the poisoner of Toppa.

"Here is this gaol bird," called Bindo Terri out loud to the carabinieri, as they went by. "He will think twice before he assaults us again; but I will be bound he will end in the galleys. Keep your eye on him, brigadier, for he is dangerous."

But for the pressure on his hand of Viola's entreating gesture, and the low supplication of old Pippo's quavering voice, the municipal guard would once more have measured his length on the dust under the weight of Carmelo's avenging arm.

For their sakes he mastered the passion that convulsed him. They passed on in silence, submissive to insult and to injury, as the people have always to be before the petty tyrannies that are called Law.

"Heed him not, my beloved," said the maiden near him. "Be calm and strong. That will be your best vengeance."

They were words of wisdom, but life cannot always be guided by wisdom.

Old Annunziata met him now also. She had begun to hobble about again with the warm weather;

she cried as she welcomed him: "Oh, my dear lad," she said, "I shall always think it was myself with that basket of eggs that was the beginning of all your troubles."

"Not you," said Carmelo, kindly. "Eggs or no eggs, these beasts would have done for me somehow."

"But they brought it against you—"

"Yes, with lies tacked to it as you tack paper to a kite's tail to carry it higher," said Cecco the cooper.

Then they all went on again, together.

They were all silent.

They were all thinking, What will he say when he sees the trees are down?

Carmelo, full of bitter thoughts and tender memories, did, indeed, strain his eyes eagerly along the road for the first sight of his father's house.

"There it is!" he cried eagerly as a turn in the river-road brought the white building with its red-tiled roof into view; then he stopped and drew a deep breath.

"But there are no trees!" he cried. Everyone was silent.

"Has father cut them down?" he cried, staring all the while straight before him.

Then Viola took courage and answered him.

"They were taken by the municipality, dear; it seems there is some public thing to be done; they want the ground——"

She was dumb, as one of the terrible oaths of Italy that burn and harrow like vitriol, rolled out of Carmelo's lips and made the listeners shudder.

He uttered nothing more, but walked on towards the mill-house where his father and his brothers and sisters were waiting for him at the little low gate.

They hung about him, and they kissed him, and wept over him, but he made them no caress in answer; he did not respond to them by any word or sign; even his youngest sister, little Isola, clinging about his knees, got no kiss from him; he looked only at his father, and from his father to the heaps of rubbish where the wood had been.

"You let that be done?"

"Son of mine," said the miller, humbly and wearily, "could you fight against the pricks? I could not."

Carmelo dropped on the wooden bench by the door above the stones where Toppa was buried, and buried his face in his hands. It was a sad home-coming.

The day was beautiful; the fields were in all

their first summer greenness; the waters were green, too, with the reflection of them; the air was full of the scent of new-mown hay and of the vine-blossoms. His sister had made ready a plenteous meal; black-birds and chaffinches sang in the hedge of arbutus and bay; the old place looked bright and kindly, but nothing changed the cloud on Carmelo's face, nothing made him smile.

He had been wronged, and a great wrong is to the nature as a cancer is to the body; there is no health.

Carmelo leaned his head on his arm and noticed none of them. It seemed to him that twenty years had rolled over him since the morning when, thinking no evil and fearing none, he had gone out on the grass to call the dog for his bread. It seemed to him that his very soul had been changed, and that in the stead of his heart there had been put into him a burning stone.

He loved Viola; the old happy, innocent, simple affection was still very sweet to him, but even that was dulled and dwarfed by his own immense anguish and wrath. A just chastisement may benefit a man, though it seldom does, but an unjust one changes all his blood to gall.

All pleasure in his future was gone out of him; all joy was dead. Some animal passions had

awakened in him during his long isolation, but all peaceful serene happiness had perished. He did not reason on this, because he was but a simple unlearned youth, but he felt it, and he hated the world of men and doubted God.

The cooper Cecco, and the elder Pastorini, and the youngest of the sons tried to make a little mirth and gossipry; but in vain old wine was poured out, in vain the men strove to laugh and chatter; a great heaviness of sorrow and of dread was over all. Viola's face was as white as the narcissus poeticus hanging their fragrant bells in the strip of mill garden, and Carmelo scarcely tasted bit or drop. In the midst of the meal his youngest sister Isola, only seven years old, burst out crying.

"Carmelino has not kissed me once!" she said, amidst her sobs.

Carmelo looked up and his mouth and eyelids quivered. He rose, caught the child in his arms, and hurried out by the open door, and there, on the old oak seat above the stone that covered the body of the dog, he bent his face over the golden head of his little sister and wept bitterly.

Within doors Demetrio Pastorini struck the wooden table heavily with his clenched fist.

He had all his life been a most peaceful man, and a more harmless, jovial, kindly, easy in temper,

and patient from sense of duty and love of quiet; but now all his blood stirred darkly within him.

"We are mules and bats, blind and dumb, and knowing not when we are smitten," he said, with a deep rage in his thickened voice. "We are more foolish than the beasts that perish, since we live and submit to our tormentors."

They were all silent.

It was a sad home-coming.

CHAPTER XI.

THE Italians are patient to a great degree. There is here as much hunger as there is in Ireland, and there are proprietors as indifferent as the absentees, but here there is no agrarian crime, no revolt against masters or landlords, no effort to shirk just payments or even unjust ones.

"Our people do not understand their rights," said a prefect to me. I thought: "When they do——well,——there will not be many prefects."

This is the fact: they do not understand; they let their sons go to the conscription, their bread money to the municipal extortioners, their last tool in fine to the tax-gatherer, their last shirt in pawn to the Monte di Pietà, and then they shut them-

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selves up and die of hunger secretly, or throw themselves in the river without a word of complaint to anyone. They do not understand their rights, and they are not at all envious of the pretty happy people driving by with prancing horses. The cursing envy of the Irish or French poor is not in the Italian; if he can sit in the sun and cut a slice of melon in summer, a slice of sausage in winter, he is content, and ready to laugh and be merry with you.

Foreigners judge the Italians by Menotti's restless emigrants and Mazzini's mystic disciples, but in real truth these make up but a small portion of the nation; to the great bulk of it revolt is alien, and a good-humoured and docile obedience most natural.

Now, no doubt it would have been far better had Carmelo gone elsewhere to seek a living. But to the higher sort of Italian poor it never occurs to leave their home. The same love that bound Dante to the *cerchio antico* binds the Italian cotter or workman to his native village. When they are taken perforce away as by conscription they hunger ceaselessly till they see their hill-side farm or cottage in the plains. Emigration does not attract them; even a change to a near city or a neighbouring province appals them as a kind of expatriation.

"I want to go to my native country" (*paese na-*

tivo), said one of the men in my employ. "It is such a long time since I was there."

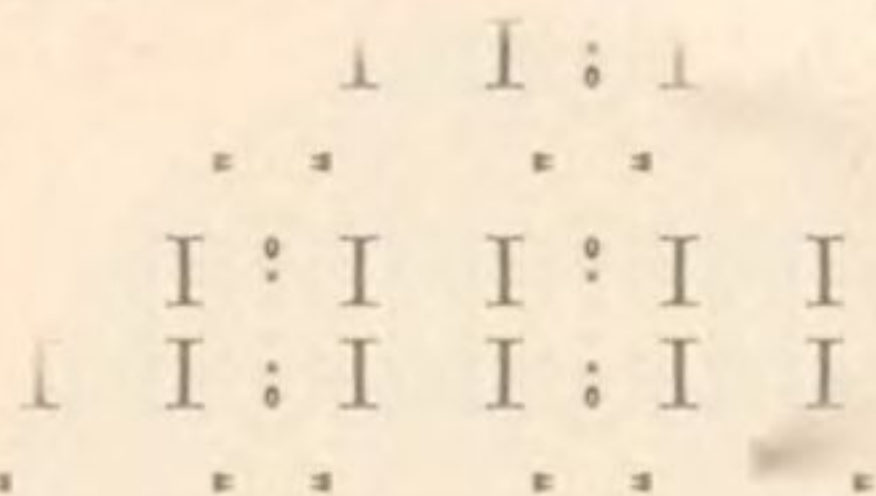
By his native country he meant an olive-clad hill that rose in sight about two miles off; he had not been there since Pasqua, and he spoke on S. Giovanni's day!

The *paese nativo* is what they love, and to this sentiment their rulers owe their incredible and illimitable patience which forbears from revolution. Leave them in their *paese nativo*, and you may do almost any oppression or extortion to them that you will.

Therefore neither to him or his did it ever occur that Carmelo would do well to leave Santa Rosalia. Besides he was the elder son, and had always been promised that the mill should pass to him, after an old rule of the family that ignored all the primogeniture-abolition of '48.

The eldest Pastorini had always had the mill, and the others had always lived there if they liked, and worked at other trades; and Demetrio Pastorini was strongly conservative, as indeed every rural Italian is in mind and blood, abhorring change, and never understanding it, or being willing to allow for it in any way.

Therefore, as I say, there was no thought that Carmelo would do well to put some breadth of



strange land between himself and his foes; but although things were going so ill at the mill-house, his marriage was never doubted or spoken of as a matter that would brook delay.

"They have suffered enough," said Pastorini, "and nothing will chase away the gloom that has gathered upon him like the face of the woman he loves always by him by day or by night."

"My son," he said therefore to Carmelo that night. "You are come home to us in evil times. The trees are down, and never a soldo will I see for them. That is certain. The steam mill of Rossi's is taking all our custom away; some go because it gets done quick, and more go because they think to please the Syndic, and the gentleman, that set it up there. I am not at all sure, my lad, that the place will bring us bread a year more. And I owe money, that I will not deny to you. I owe money, but I have not heart to stand in the way of the only joy you can grasp. You shall wed the girl to-morrow."

So the very morning after his return, all formalities having been gone through well-nigh twelve months before, they went quietly and with no mirth up to the church of San Giuseppe, and were wedded before the altar by Dom Lelio.

There were few dry eyes there amongst their friends: she had thought of little Raggi, and had

put an almond sprig in her bosom off the tree that grew by the little grave, and the two old men stood beside her, careworn, and with a vague and ghastly dread weighing on their souls.

Would these two, whose lives were made one, find anything in the future except toil and pain? Would their children be begotten for anything beyond hunger and care? Would they be allowed to see their years go by in such peace as sweetens labour? Would not their hearts be harrowed and their cupboards bare?

There would be enough if they were let alone, but not enough for tax and fine, for torment and extortion.

Carmelo said very little. He felt scarce any joy. The dull, sullen shame of his captivity was still on him. The bitter rage of his wrongs suffocated almost all gentler thoughts, all tenderer emotions. He loved the maiden who had been so true to him; but the days of dalliance seemed gone for ever from him: he said to himself, "Have I a right to procreate innocent creatures to be as wretched as I have been, and to bear the burdens that our people bear?"

For he had learned to think, in the long watches of those nights, in hospital and prison; and all that

the communist had taught him was for ever fermenting in his mind.

The marriage service was said and over very early in the morning, for they wished to make no fuss, and draw no eyes upon them, save the kindly ones of a few old neighbours who had known them both from their birth. The child Isola had gathered a great bunch of the wild narcissus, which filled the church with its fragrance; that was their only emblem of rejoicing. Viola wore the grey gown she had laid aside in the past summer; and the good vicar blessed them with a quiver in his voice, and they went as quietly and sadly home again; the stick of old Pippo keeping tune and time on the stones with Annunziata's crutch.

Then every one went to his work again, and there was no attempt at any kind of festivity: it would have been unfitting, and Carmelo would have had no heart for such a thing.

He and Viola went home with the old man to the little square house to break bread with him ere she departed for ever. They had offered to live with him there a few months before taking up their abode at the mill; but Pippo had refused the offer, sweet as it was to him, for he said to himself: "They will distraint all I have: the girl will be best away from that."

He had a little meal for them, and they sat at it silently: no one had appetite to eat. It was like a funeral rather than a bridal feast. None of the broad jokes common at such times were heard, and no levity could lift its head under such sorrow.

It wrung the heart of Viola to leave the old man all alone to do his chores, and make his bread and bed; but Pippo, harshly at the last, said that he would have it so, and so best liked it: and she submitted.

The mill was but half-a-mile off down the river: she promised herself that she would run in to him a dozen times a day to do all that was needed. With the miller's three girls there would be little for her to do in her father-in-law's house, and Carmelo was fond of Pippo.

Pippo filled a glass with wine and lifted it solemnly upward.

"My girl," he said gravely; "be as good a wife as you have been a good child to me, and you will be as a vein of gold to those you go to dwell with. You have had sore trouble here. May it never find you where you go now. Demetrio, drink with me: health and long life to your son and your son's sons when you and I be underneath the sod."

Then, with twilight, the young people went away to the mill-house, where there were now no

nightingales safe in leafy trees to sing through the hours of their nuptial night; and old Pippo was left alone in his little, dull, and quiet place, where there was no sound but of the Rosa water breaking on the sand beneath the willows.

He looked through his back door at little Raggi's grave.

"My wee dog," he said to it. "I shall soon be like you now. Let the thieves come and seize; they cannot get blood out of a post; and it does not matter for me, since you and the girl are gone."

Then he sat him down by the cold hearth, with his hands on his knees, and his head on his breast, and never stirred till midnight came.

CHAPTER XII.

WITH the return of mild weather Annunziata had lost her rheumatic pains, and had been able to get off her bed and put on her huge leather boots, that had once belonged to a cattle-dealer, and begin to go about again, up and down the near hills, and to and fro the roads.

The poor old soul had always been certain in her own mind that her basket of eggs had been at

the bottom of Carmelo's troubles, and she never could forgive herself for having complained about them, especially as when the case was brought on at Pomodoro, where it had been sent by Messer Nellemane, she had been forced to attend as an accuser, and had cried so much that the Pretore had abused her, and had felt a great deal more remorse than Pompéo of Sestriano did when they ordered him six weeks' imprisonment.

"And know another time, you, that it is a breach of the law to conceal a theft, and that such concealment on the part of the person robbed makes such person liable to heavy penalties," had thundered the young judge at Annunziata, who had cried again as if her heart would break, but, being an obstinate old woman, would insist on answering that she could not for the life of her see why anybody should mind her being robbed if she did not.

"That shows how lamentably, how culpably, ignorant you are of the first rudiments of morality and public duty," said the Pretore, who was as like Messer Nellemane in his ideas and his expressions of them, as a green bunch of grapes is like a ripened one. He was exactly like him, without his mellowed suavity, and exquisite patience with foolish people, which were gifts of time and nature that Messer Nellemane had carefully cultivated with

a view to the future, when he should be a Minister, and hold the heart of the State in his hands.

Annunziata had still gone on crying, having seen the smith of Sestriano led off by carabinieri.

"And he will murder me when he comes out," she had cried, "and small blame will it be to him, the poor thing, for he was drunk as drunk could be, or never would he have touched the eggs!"

"If he murder you, he will go to the galleys," had said the guards as they took her away.

"And what good will that be to me when I am dead?" had said 'Nunziatina. "And he is a good man enough when the drink is not in him; that I have always told you."

On the whole, the ungovernable resolution to have her own way, and the answers that she had thus made to those in authority over her, had produced an impression against her in the minds of all the officials, who had agreed that she was an insolent and cantankerous old woman.

"If there were but a Vagrant Act, I would consign her to the lock-up at once," had said the Pretore to Messer Nellemane, who said in his turn:

"I think the Cavaliere Durellazzo will bring in something of the kind; we are overrun with beggars; but, of course, unless this larger commune do the same, it will scarcely be effective."

"I will speak to our Syndic," had answered the Pretore.

The Syndic of Pomodoro was the elder brother of that excellent Count Saverio who was the president of the charitable Confraternità di San Francesco di Assisi.

"Are there many mendicants about?" the Syndic had asked his brother, after having been spoken to by the Pretore.

Count Saverio had thrown up his hands, implying that they were many as the sands of the sea.

"They are a great anxiety to us," he had added, "for they are always applying to us, and you know our rules do not permit us to relieve beggars. If there were any law by which one could deal with them——"

"There ought to be one," had said the Syndic of Pomodoro. "I will speak to Durellazzo."

So in the council chamber of the Giunta in the Palazzo Communale, Messer Nellemane had known very well that it was the marriage day of Viola, but was at the same time enjoying such a victory of reason over prejudice that he had no time to indulge in any of the sentiments of a passion disappointed and outrivalled.

By his representations to the Cav. Durellazzo,

and the Cav. Durellazzo's representations to the Giunta, he had succeeded in having adopted for Vezzaja and Ghiralda, as he and the Pretore had desired, the laws of the cities against vagrancy and mendicancy.

There had been a strong prejudice against this course in the Giunta; for Italians, until their humanity is effaced by Impiegatism, do not incline to severity; climate and custom alike making them lenient.

But Cav. Durellazzo read a report prepared by his secretary, and endorsed by himself, that presented quite appalling evidence of the persons who lived by beggary or alms of some sort. The order of which Messer Nellemane is the type, is never greater or happier than when preparing a report of this kind, which, dealing with the exact science of statistics, deals a death-blow to those unproductive and erratic classes which every bureaucracy abhors.

The report concluded with a short moral essay on the beauties of providence and industry, and the patriotism and public spirit that were required in all members of the public to enable them to extinguish their individual sentiments and private pity, and look on the question from the higher standpoint of general interest and the good of all humanity.

It was a very warm day in March; the council chamber was small, and, as children say, stuffy; the Giunta was half asleep, and all that was awake of it was longing for a flask of wine; the voice of the Cavaliere Durellazzo was sonorous, but provocative of somnolence; the Giunta assented to the new law with the pliancy of men whose bodies are moist, and whose throats are dry; it was embodied in an appendix of thirty-five new regulations and sent to the Prefect to be approved.

This is a mere form, like sending a death warrant to a sovereign.

The Prefect approved of course, naturally; first of all, it was not his interest to quarrel with the commune; secondly, he assented to these new rules without even thinking what the long documents forwarded to him meant. He was in a hurry to get to the city races, and he also was warm.

The prefect's secretary sent them to the Home Minister, but he was in all the fiery heat of conflict on Montecitorio, and had much to do to keep his own place, and had no time to give to the affairs of a remote municipality hidden away under corn and vines. He assented too: it is always the strongest possible point with ministers and prefects that the country communes are autonomous. When somebody remarked to him that they were ill governed,

he said it was their own fault: if they chose to elect asses, they must; it was no business of anybody's. So the law against vagrants was incorporated into the code of Vezzaja and Ghiralda, and was pasted up upon the walls in large letters, which, as nine-tenths of the population could not read, was not to any great purpose.

There, alas! were a great many old folks too old to do anything, who lived with their families, and who, to avoid being a burden to them, went about to all the villas and got pence here, bread there, a cup of *mezzo-vino*, or an old bundle of scraps, as it might chance. If you had called these people beggars, they would have been amazed. They were all well known, never asked for what was not offered to them, and had been hard-working men and women until their sight or their limbs had failed them.

These old folks the new rules stunned and slew like a pole-axe.

They did no harm; not a mite of harm; and as the State provided no poor-house for them, they could not see that there was any such very great guilt in taking from their richer neighbours a little aid that the richer were never harmed by, and gave willingly.

But, in these days, Christian Europe decides

that not only the poor man lying by the wayside, but also the Samaritan who helps him, are sinners against political economy, and its law forbids what its religion orders: people must settle the contradiction as they deem best; they generally are content to settle it by buttoning up their pockets and passing by on the other side. This was the consequence of the new rules for the suppression of mendicancy in Vezzaja and Ghiralda.

Now the suppression of mendicancy is a very good thing; but, as you never can suppress poverty, it would be better to provide a substitute for him before you shelve the Samaritan.

I know a very good man last winter who gave away soup-tickets to all who asked him; and he could not understand how anybody wanted anything more. Now a bowl of soup is a very good thing; but I never knew anybody who could live on it, and I have known a good many who felt ashamed to present the ticket and take the soup there in public. Why are you expected to have no sensitive nerves and no pride because you are starving? I cannot see why you should be myself; but it is a fact that such things are not permitted to you.

Messer Nellemane went a step farther than my good man: he thought people should not have soup at all unless they bought it.

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His rules were framed on this principle, which he considered to be a sound and healthy one; and as they were also adopted for the larger commune of Pomodoro-Carciofi, he thought they would sweep the land as clean as a steam reaper-and-binder sweeps a corn field, leaving gleaners empty-handed.

As none of the old men and women involved, understood anything at all of these fresh laws, printed up in big type on the walls of the Communal Palace, they were swept into the net as easily as quails are at Naples.

If a regiment of the blind, the infirm, and the very aged would have been any use to the Minister of War, he could have had a large one from these nettings of Messer Nellemane.

But, alas! they were of no use for anything; and, being nigh their end, so took it to heart when they were locked up that most of them died incontinently; and though nobody really would believe it, for it sounds too absurd, many a humble little home under the pines of the hill-side, or down amongst the maize and vines of the level ground was the sadder, because an old granddam or grandsire sat no more on the wooden settle cheerily telling the tale of his day's wanderings.

These laws came into effect on the first day of June, just twenty days after Carmelo and Viola were

married, and one fine afternoon, as Annunziata was trotting about with her stick, feeling happy because her rheumatism was gone for the moment, and because her girl was happily wedded, she was touched on the shoulder by Bindo Terri, the municipal guard, and arrested.

In vain she wept, and prayed, and sobbed, and moaned that she had always been an honest woman. She was a mendicant under the Act; she had no private means of subsistence, nor did she work for her living; she was clearly a mendicant.

She was taken off to the guard-house with her basket, full of scraps and pence and odds and ends, as proof of her guilt, found upon her, and without any more words or any hearing at all, was carried away to Pomodoro and there consigned to prison.

"It is the new law," said Bindo, and that was all he would say to her: he was very stern and very arrogant, and very much puffed up with this addition to the joys and the powers of his office.

"Do not tell Carmelo; for the love of God, do not tell, or he will come burning the town down to get me out!" cried the simple soul to Bindo.

And so distraught and wretched was this poor old trot at the thought of the disgrace and sorrow she should bring on those she loved, that she fretted herself in half an hour into such a state of body

and mind, that the gaoler forthwith pronounced her in his own mind to be mad, and sent her to the same hospital where young Carmelo had languished through the winter nights and spring-tide days.

It was precisely for such cases as hers that the *Confraternità di S. Francesco* had been instituted, but, as the modern moralities of that society forbade them to encourage beggars, the Count Saverio, though he heard of her case, could not on principle bestir himself on her behalf.

He was, indeed, at the moment he heard of it, occupied with his stock-broker, who interested him much more, and he said quickly to the clerk who told him of it:

"A vagrant; a confirmed mendicant. No, we could not interfere; it would be an injurious example. We are bound to take broad views: to consider the public."

Meantime, Bindo hied quickly homeward and said to his young brother, who resembled him as one pea resembles another:

"I took up the old 'Nunziatina this morning. Let some lad go say so at the mill-house; best not go yourself."

The lad winked and ran off; half an hour later, as the family at the mill were sitting down to their frugal noonday meal, Viola and Carmelo at the

places that would be theirs all their lives, a grinning youngster looked in at the house door and cried to them:

"Your old woman is in prison—the new law's out to day!—they have taken her to the town——"

Then he ran away swiftly to escape from the chastisement he merited.

They all rose to their feet; Viola was trembling very much:

"It cannot be true. It cannot be true. They never would touch 'Nunziatina. All the world knows her!"

"I will go and see," said Carmelo, and his face was very dark.

"No!" said Demetrio Pastorini. "Get not yourself into more trouble. Most like it is but an idle word. Stay you with your wife; and Dante, do you harness me Bigio."

"Nay, father, that cannot be," said Carmelo. "It is Viola's aunt that is in peril and misery. Come with me if you will, but let me go."

"Be it so," said Pastorini. "But remember, for the love of the saints, no violence. You are not alone in life now."

Carmelo looked out of the door at the bank of mud, where once had been his bright *boschetto*.

"We are slaves," he said bitterly. "Slaves can but submit."

"What did my brother die for in the wars?" said his father.

Viola entreated to go with them, and, being not a month after her marriage, neither man could find heart to refuse her.

The way to Pomodoro, as the way to all things southward, lay along that river road which was to be disfigured by the tramway at such time as speculators and municipalities should have finished their squabbles. There was a short cut that passed by her grandfather's cottage, too narrow for waggons and carriages, but broad enough for a little *baroccio* like the miller's.

They passed that way to save time, and say a word to Pippo.

But as they drew nigh the cottage, close enough to discern the blue Madonna, Viola, whose eyes were quickest to see their beloved little, humble home, cried out:

"*Nonno* is moving away!—moving away and never telling us!"

Carmelo checked the horse and sprang to the ground: his cheeks grew very white; his teeth clenched; he had caught sight of other figures than Pippo's amidst the chairs and tables, the mattresses

and saucepans, the bowls and jugs that were put out in a heap beyond the door.

The figures he had seen were the Usciere and his assistants, two straggling do-nothings of the place, who lent themselves to this despised office for sake of the two francs a day they got by it, and the pleasure of seeing the pain of better people than themselves, which is a joy to scoundrels, always.

"Your grandsire is only cleaning, Viola," he said hurriedly. "Only cleaning his things. I think I will go and help him if you will go on with father to Pomodoro."

But Viola also had seen what he had seen.

"They are *selling* his things!" she said, with a piercing scream, and ere either man could stay her she had sprung off the cart on to the shaft, and from the shaft on to the ground, and had run onward across the path into the house.

The elder Pastorini threw the reins on his grey steed's back, and got down likewise. Carmelo was already on the grass.

"Oh, *nonno, nonno*, what is it?" cried Viola, as she ran into the entrance room, and saw her grandfather sitting there in his basket chair by the cold hearth, just as he had done through all the long, lonely evening of her nuptial day.

Pippo lifted his head; his face was set and stern, but calm.

"They are selling the old things," he said. "I thought they could not get blood out of a post, but it seems they can."

Then he put his pipe in his mouth again.

Viola threw herself on her knees by the old man, and hid her face on his arm.

"Oh, *nonno, nonno!*" she moaned, "Why did you not let me stay with you? I would never have left you if I had known."

"No," said the old man, with his mouth quivering a little on the pipe stem that it clenched. "I knew well you wouldn't, my lass. You were aye thoughtful of me. But you could have done not a mite of good, and you would only have lost your own joy."

On the threshold Carmelo had seized by the shoulders one of the men who was carrying out the bed that had been Viola's, and was shouting in his ear:

"Thief, and the servant of thieves, let go! Carry off one of these things from this house and I will brain you all——"

Then old Pippo rose, and struck on the floor with his stick.

"Carmelo, son of Demetrio," he cried in a stern

loud voice. "You are wedded-mate to my girl, but you are no master of mine, and in my house have no voice. What I bid you do, do; but nought else. Come quiet to my side, and let them work their will."

Obedience and respect to elders are fine old primitive virtues that are still strong, like the olive and the chestnut on their hills, in the heart of the Italian. Carmelo heard, and hesitated a moment, then took his hand off the man's shoulders, and looked wistfully at Pippo.

"You will not resist?" he muttered.

"Where is the good of resisting? When you cannot make resistance good, it is but a silliness and a paltriness. They are stronger than we. They take the goods. Let them, and go your ways. Make not your wife mourn for you in the Murata; that would be harder to bear than loss of cup and platter, bed and board."

Carmelo stood still, like a chidden child.

Outside the elder Pastorini was speaking with the Usciere, begging for delay, and praying of him to put back the goods into the house.

"If you pay me this sum down now, I will, though it is late," said the Usciere.

Demetrio Pastorini felt a mist in his eyes, and a ball in his throat.

The figures that he saw were a total of nigh two hundred francs, nigh 8*l*. if you put it in English sovereigns, and Demetrio had no money at home, nay, was in debt to more than one, now that the steam mill took from him the wheat of more than half the peasantry; for folks will run to what is new, and what is popular, and what brings them credit.

He stood irresolute, meditating whether he could raise money by any means, and the men went on with their work, hauling out into the open air the poor sticks that made the furniture of Pippo. Rich and rare things look sorry when thus treated and thrown together in the sun and dust; these poor little things of Pippo's looked little more than fit for firewood or the dust-heap.

"They give us all this trouble," said the Usciere, like an ill-used man. "They give us all this trouble with their obstinacy, and we take all they have, and then when it is all put together it is not worth a kick from a dog."

He gave a shove as he spoke to the mound of things, and a copper vessel or two rolled down in a clatter.

They were all silent; the assistants were making a great noise bringing down the steep stone stair an old chest of drawers, older than Pippo himself. It

was the chest in which Viola had kept her mother's wedding gown until the day of her own marriage, with the orange leaves and the lavender to drive away the moths.

Viola, on her knees by the old man's side, was rocking herself violently to and fro, weeping.

"And Annunziata, Annunziata!" she murmured in her sobs.

Carmelo stood aloof; his arms folded, his face very dark.

"What of her?" asked Pippo.

"They have taken her up; she is in prison; they call her a beggar."

Pippo gave a short hard laugh, as his teeth still held the pipe stem.

"Why don't they get out the guns, and set us all in a row, and fire us down? 'twould be quicker done, and easier."

"It is the new law," said the voice of the Usciere, who was lending a hand to get out the walnut drawers.

"Law, law, law!" muttered Pippo, with his eyes savage like a wild cat's, under his white eyebrows. "There's law for this and that and t'other, till the land is sick; but there's no law against the poor starving to death: there's no law against their dying naked on the naked floor. Will you tax the mother's

breasts next, or the babe's swaddling clothes? You're ripe to do it. But the mothers should cheat you, and dash out the brains of their sucklings on the house wall, ere they be old enough to sweat and pine and drag the cannon for the State that curses them."

Then the old man dashed his pipe upon the ground and rose.

"Get you all gone to Annunziata," he said, as he forced Viola roughly from the ground. "Get you gone to her, and leave me alone with the thieves. I have the roof above me yet, and I am not a maiden to mourn for a lost looking-glass. I can lie on the floor well enow, and a bit of dry bread needs no platter. Get you gone."

They had no choice but to obey him. Carmelo's downcast lowering eyes, and compressed and pallid lips told his father with how violent an effort did he keep down his arm and his words; his father knew, too, that this effort was strung, nearly to breaking point, and he was thankful that Pippo's will set him free to carry away the lad ere he should do to these enemies what no man could absolve or efface.

They got up into the cart again, and drove on by the edge of the river; Viola was still weeping convulsively.

"Grandfather, who has led such an honest, hard-

working life, and never owed one penny!" she said amidst her tears. "And what is it all for? It is not a debt. It is no debt, and who has any right to make these claims?—"

Carmelo's hand grasped hers.

He could not speak.

All the words of the dead German were echoing in his ears, and he was saying to himself, as Pippo had done,

"How long, O Lord? O Lord?"

Viola thought to herself with shrinking and sorrow:

"If I had let Messer Gaspardo make a bad woman of me, all these my dear ones would not have suffered thus."

And no doubt Messer Nellemane was the cause of all their woes.

But what shall we say of the State and the Law that make Messer Nellemane possible?

CHAPTER XIII.

THE cart drove on, and the old man Pippo sat himself down in the chimney corner, though it was a warm day, and fine of course, and saying never a word, and making no sign, he let the plunderers carry on their work of pillage. The spirit had gone out of him; something of vacancy had come over his face and into his eyes; his hands were joined on his knees, and he kept muttering:

“Two and three make five, and four is nine, and six is fifteen——”

And so on through all the numerals; he was adding up all the sums that the municipality had claimed from him; those that had been paid by him, and those for which the law was now seizing his goods.

It was a long sum, and it bothered his head; he had never been good at figures.

He sat there till it was quite dark; long after the distrainers had ransacked every hole and corner, and carried off every pot and pan, and gone away leaving him nought but his four bare walls and the roof above him.

When it was quite dark, and the stars were beginning to tremble in the summer skies, the cart came by his door again and stopped, and Viola came to him.

She was shivering very much and sobbing. Pippo did not either hear or see her at first; the figures were in his ears, in his heart, in his brain, before his sight. She had to shake him by the shoulder to rouse him; and even then he looked stupid.

"What did you find?" he said then, and he thought his mouth moved with difficulty, and his tongue seemed fastened.

"We found her locked up," sobbed his granddaughter. "And we could do nothing, nothing. They will not let her out, and she is so wretched, and I feared all the while that Carmelo would break into some violence; it was all his father and I could do to keep him still——"

"They have locked her up, have they?"

"Yes! And she is always crying to them to let her see the sun!" and Viola's tears choked her voice as she spoke.

"They have locked her up, have they?" said Pippo stupidly. "And they have taken all my things. Well, I do not know, my lass, why folk should try to be decent and honest; we are fools for our pains."

Then he turned round to the cold fire-place once more and began counting.

"Two and three make five, and four is nine, and six is fifteen——"

Viola went to the door and spoke.

"Let me stay with him this night; I cannot leave him alone; indeed, indeed, I cannot!"

"I will stay too," said Carmelo; and he came down from the cart, and bade his father drive home.

Pippo did not notice him; he was always counting.

There was no light but from the moon, for the men of the law had taken away both lamp and oil. There was nothing to use; nothing to serve; no table to spread.

Viola, checking her bitter sobs, sought in the old wall-cupboards she knew so well for a broken plate or a bent spoon, but all was gone. There was only a little rusty tin can and a half-loaf of bread; nothing else anywhere was to be found in all the house.

Carmelo stooped down and made a little fire with some charcoal-dust that lay in the stove, and she pumped some fresh water, and put it, with some of the bread, and an onion, from the garden in the little pot to boil. There was not a stoup of wine nor a pinch of rice in all the place.

All this while Pippo was busy counting. The young people crouched together on the ground, and the old man sat on the wooden settle; the white moon shone in through the square window; the room was full of smoke and bad smells from the steam-mill; in other years at this season every chamber had been sweet with the scent of the lilacs by the river.

Suddenly a mouse ran across the feet of Pippo; the mouse roused him; he lifted his head from his breast and saw the figures of his children crouching together on the stones in the moonlight.

Then he looked round the empty, naked room, and laughed a little harshly.

"They have got blood out of a post; they have got blood out of a post; have my gentlemen. They think I'll kill myself like Nanni. It's four hundred and sixty-five francs in all, and I am to drive my brook underground, and spend all my mint of money on masons and engineering folk. What would the king say? what would the king say? And the old woman locked up like a purse-lifter or a trull. This is what we lit up our oil for the day after San Martino! There's the moon, but where's the lilacs? I don't smell them. What's that smoke coming in my house? What smoke is that? Get out, you foul

thing, get out! They have sold me up, but I am master here yet!"

He got on his feet and struck at the smoke wildly, beating the air with his hands; then, finding nothing resist him, he looked round angrily, and slowly recognised Carmelo and Viola.

"Why wait you here?" he said thickly. "Go you home, my dears. You are lovers still, and the night is sweet to you; get you home. Nay, I would be alone. I have my house over my head; I am not out in the street yet."

And he would take no denial, but thrust them away almost roughly, and shut to the door; then he sat himself down again, and again began counting, "Two and three make five, and four are nine, and six make fifteen," and so on through all the figures they had brought against him, repeating them over and over again, all through the dreary hours of the night.

"He will lose his mind, saying over those figures!" sobbed Viola, as they stood in the night air, no more, as of old, clear, silvery and sweet, but full of noxious steam and stench.

Carmelo wound his arm about her; he dared not trust himself to speak.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE law has been compared by some writers to Fate. It may, perhaps, be more accurately compared to the Juggernaut, which rolls on regardless whether it crushes straw or diamonds, youth or age, beauty or deformity.

The Juggernaut having been set in motion by Messer Nellemane, it rolled over Pippo quite regardless of his circumstances; and a few mornings after the Usciere had taken away everything except the little rusty pot, the law, which is never conscious of being ridiculous, served a summons to this old destitute man to pay sixty francs for a month's delay in executing the work above the running water commanded by the commune.

Pippo could not read, but he knew the look of the summons paper with the arms of the province a-top of its long pages. He laughed a shrill, hard little laugh, and twisted the paper up and lit his pipe with it.

He had a stupid and vacant look on his face, and he was very taciturn; and when alone at work could always be heard muttering over and adding

up those figures; but he had set his back up straight against his lot; he would not die like Nanni.

He went on with his basket-work and vegetable garden; one neighbour brought in an old chair, and another a kettle, and another some cracked plates, and Dom Lelio lent him a mattress; and so Pippo began life again at nigh seventy years of age; an age when hope is only a remembered thing, like a fair bird flown away long ago down the golden mists of the valley of youth.

They had been allowed to see 'Nunziatina once more, but the interview was but added pain to her and to themselves. She was almost distraught; her dim eyes were streaming with tears, and her voice was hoarse with screaming. She could be made to understand nothing; she could not fancy anything except that they thought her guilty of some crime.

"Let me get out; let me go free!" she was crying with all her force. "I want the air; I want to see the sky. This is the day I am always to go to Varammista for my bread, and the pretty foreign child comes and gives me something more herself, and smiles with her blue eyes; let me get out; I have got a rose at home on purpose for the little

miss; let me go to my own home. I shall die away from my own house."

The little musty place where she had cooked and worked, and eaten and slept for forty years, ever since her husband's death, was dearer to her than her palace to a queen.

"Dear lad, don't you get into trouble for me," she said to Carmelo. "But let me out they must. I have done no harm at all. I only want to go home. Tell them to let me go home; I don't want a cart or anything; I can walk every step of the way."

But no one would let her out; and there they had to leave her. But for the entreating pressure of Viola's hand upon his arm, Carmelo would have done that day what would have lodged him anew in the Carcere of Pomodoro. Sadly they had left her, and sadly they had returned.

Carmelo had only one thing of any value in the world; it was a watch that his grandfather had given him, leaving it to him by will as to his favourite. It was an old silver watch, two hundred years old, with fine *répoussé* work of cherubs and foliage around it: it went well still, and was as big as a peach. Carmelo loved and honoured it so that he never wore it except on feast-days and Sundays. He wound it up only on those rarer

occasions; at other times it lay in his drawer, wrapped in a silk handkerchief.

The day after he had seen Annunziata for the second time, in the prison of Pomodoro, he waited carefully till Viola was busy washing linen and his father was out of sight; then he stepped upstairs, took the watch out of its drawer and slipped it in his pocket. Then he went and harnessed the mule.

"I am going to take that flour back to Varamista," he called in at the kitchen window.

The flour had been ground for the *fattore* of that place. His brothers helped him up with the sacks, and he drove away, no one thinking that he was on any uncommon errand.

He drove to Varammista (where unhappily he found the owners who liked Annunziata were absent), and left his sacks with their *fattore*, then on into the town that he hated. His face was flushed, and he carried his head high as he went through the streets. He fancied everyone was pointing at him.

There was a shop in the place that was a jeweller's and an antiquity seller's, both in one, kept by a man of whom in the happy weeks before his marriage Carmelo had bought some little coral and silver earrings for Viola.

Carmelo walked into the shop now, and held out the watch. "How much?" he asked.

The jeweller stared, and took the watch in one hand; he had often seen and often coveted it.

"Twenty francs?" he said, hesitatingly. "You know it will only sell for old silver. No one will buy a watch that is not new."

"That is a lie," said Carmelo, "for you told me yourself that all that work round it made it of value; yourself, you said so two years ago, at the wine fair, when I showed it you."

"I only said that to please you," said the jeweller, who, however, longed for the watch.

After chaffing and disputing a quarter of an hour, Carmelo was sick of heart, and said passionately:

"Give me fifty francs, and you shall have it. You know well enough I would not let it go but for some dire necessity."

"You are always in trouble," said the jeweller testily; but he paid the money and locked the old watch up in a desk: he knew a collector of such things who would give him ten napoleons any day for it.

Carmelo went out of the shop; his face was a dusky red; he felt ashamed. But he kept to his purpose. He took the fifty francs and went to the

prison. If anyone would pay so much caution money as guarantee that the offence would not be repeated, those guilty of begging were let go out again.

"My father has sent me to pay the money for 'Nunziatina,' he said unsteadily to the gaoler. "May she come out with me now?"

"Ugh! We do not do things as fast as all that," they said to him.

Nevertheless, they were obliged to abide by their own rules, and the next night Annunziata, weeping and laughing, was at home in her own room.

Viola missed the watch.

"Oh, my love, how good you are!" she cried.

Carmelo blushed and shook his head.

"Do not praise me, sweetheart. Your people are mine."

After that action something of the gloom and bitterness that had been on him, lifted, and once or twice he smiled his old merry smile, and little Isola threw her arms about him, and cried:

"Oh, Carmelino mio! Forget all the wicked men, and let us be happy."

"I will forget them if they will let me, dear," said Carmelo.

And so he would, and, thus forgetting, would have been a blameless, useful, and contented man.

But the State, which creates Messer Nellemane, does not care to have useful, harmless, and contented men in its cities and communes. It thinks it of far greater importance that no dog should be seen in the streets, no poverty be exempt from a tax, and no man be able to call his soul his own; it likes to have its *gros bataillons* of unwilling conscripts, and it thinks it more profitable to have its galleys and its hospitals full than to remit a tax, or cease to keep ten clerks to do the work of one.

CHAPTER XV.

PASTORINI grew very anxious; his many boys and girls had always been as much as he could find food and clothes for in the best of times, and now they were very heavy on him. Dina indeed was to marry in a year or so, but her betrothed was poor. The other girls were all young and, though handy and helpful, could not bring in anything; and though, when plenty of grist came to the mill, he could make ends meet, now that Rossi's iron servant took two-thirds of the grain away he grew very harassed, and afraid, especially as he foresaw, as I have said, that with the summer the water would be shallower than ever now that the trees were gone; and in effect it had become so as early as June, a thing never known before, and the big black wheels stood high and dry with the weeds on them dying in the sun, whilst farther below on the Rosa the black devil, as the people called it, vomited smoke and worked all day and all night.

It was a hideous blot on the landscape; it spread dirt and dust and poisonous vapours all around it; and the little children near it grew pallid and sickly

little things instead of the Correggio-like loves, all rosy and brown, that they had been. But Messer Nellemane, sitting before the Nuova Italia (though, if he had confessed the truth, he was choked by the smoke as well as lesser people) said to everyone:

“What a pleasure it is to see that pillar of progress arisen in our midst;” and all Santa Rosalia understood, by his look and his smile, that whosoever would wish to please the municipality must carry his grain to Remigio Rossi.

The place had been, of yore, sweet with the scent of the flowers on the river-bank according to each season, of the meadow-thyme and the fragrant yellow tulip, of the vine-blossom and the sturdy rosemary, of the acacias and the catalpas, of the magnolias and the Chinese olives; now there was only a stench of oil and hot iron, and the smoke of burning lignite; but the present generation has been taught to think this is a change for the better, and Messer Nellemane was essentially a man of modern mind.

An engine smelt sweeter to him than a lilac-bush; and he thought hurry, strife, noise, and money-making much finer things than “fair quiet, and sweet rest.”

Dear Old Leisure, with his smile of peace and

hands of blessing, was but an old-fashioned obstructionist to him.

The last day of the past month of March had been the day on which the first half-yearly payment of the interest of his mortgage was due from Pippo; an interest of fifty per cent., which on a loan of three hundred francs with all the costs thereof—as he phrased it, a hundred scudi—was a hundred and fifty every twelve months.

Pippo had by no means understood what mortgages were; the law of hypothec was Greek to him; when the day came round, of course he had not the money, and truly had never in any way realised the arrangement to which he had put his cross before witnesses. The time went by without any great disquietude, except that uneasy sense of debt and burden which was so new and horrible to him. His head had got muddled, and as he could not read he could not clear himself by any study of papers.

When the Usciere had seized his things he had said to himself: “I shall have to tell that advocate down in Pomodoro, for I never will be able to pay him aught yearly.”

But his head never seemed right now; he forgot things, and could not recollect words very often when he wanted them, and so the matter kept

slipping his mind, and when he remembered it he thought to himself: "Well, he will get the house at my death, so he will be no loser."

That was his unlearned view of hypothec.

The lawyer neither sent nor wrote to him, so naturally he was confirmed in his delusion. It was now August, and in his empty home he was making a good fight against fortune. His work brought him in, on an average, not eighty centimes a day, but that was enough for his few and frugal wants.

"If my health only will serve," he said to himself, weaving the osiers that he had now to buy, "I should like to see Viola's boy on my knees."

That fancy kept up his spirit, though his head would always buzz. The child would be best unborn, he knew, but still he wished to live to see it.

Now to Messer Nellemane there were a perverseness and almost an insolence in this old man, so very small, poor, and helpless, presuming to live on, and lift his head up again after such a series of deserved chastisements as he had received.

To see Pippo sitting at work in the doorway was irritating to him, and not atoned for by the fact that Pippo was surrounded as he sat by all the foul fumes and vapours of the steam mill across the river. And there was the running water, too, always

bubbling across the roadway, and the months slipping away one after another, with the old man still at liberty to sit in the air and mock the municipal majesty by disobedience.

What was to be done?

Messer Nellemane was for ever turning over the problem in his mind, and even stooped to the humility of asking the advice of the deputy of Pomodoro, who was in the neighbourhood, being on the point of marriage with the Zauli heiress.

"I should have the work executed if really necessary for the public good," said Signore Luca Finti gravely, "and then I should debit the offending proprietor with the cost of the works. That is the usual course taken in Rome."

Messer Nellemane thanked his distinguished adviser cordially, and proceeded to get out several blank forms, signed by the Cavaliere Durellazzo which it was needful to fill in before acting.

The whole of Santa Rosalia was in a mess with public works; those for the steam mill had left heaps of black rubbish about, those for the tramway had left many mounds of as yet unlaid iron rails; the old bridge, which was as firm as a rock, and quite wide enough for the bullocks and mules that alone passed over it was being pulled about and widened by the Giunta; altogether the pretty little green village had

that dusty unkempt, stony, desolate look which so many "improved" places have in Rome and Venice, and which is an aspect always as sweet to the municipal mind, as a wasted province is to a conqueror.

The conqueror sees his victories in the smoking fields; the Municipality sees its commissions and concessions in the rubbish heaps.

So one day Pippo had several workpeople whom he knew, masons and plumbers and the like, come about his premises; and they made as though they would pass through the house into the kitchen garden behind where Raggi was buried under the willows. But Pippo slammed the door in their faces.

"No, no," said he, "they have taken all I had out of it, but the four walls are mine still. Into it not a man comes without my leave and license."

The men beat on the door, and told him through the door that they came to work for the municipality.

"You don't come to work for me; and into my house you come not," said Pippo. "A hundred scudi your municipality has robbed me of, and I do not open my door to the thieves of a thief. Get you gone."

Most of the workmen were old neighbours of his,

and were for going away in silence, but amongst them were two masons from another part of the world, employed, and brought there by Pierino Zaffi.

These called to him to let them in, in the name of the law, and, as he made them no reply, they went and asked of Messer Nellemane permission to open the door by force.

To them Messer Nellemane replied:

"I do not love force; it is the weapon of the barbarian. I think we will wait a few days. Mazzetti may hear reason."

So he postponed the execution of the work, and counted up the days that had elapsed since Pippo had been ordered to begin the work; and the many times he had been summoned to appear and answer for his transgressions; all those various summonses which the old rebel had put in the fire.

Then he took the diligence over to Pomodoro, and had a little talk with the advocate Niccolo Poccianti, who lived by the Pretura.

"I am afraid for your grandfather, *carina*," said the cooper to Viola. "Always alone like that, and the house so miserable, and over the wall I hear him always muttering, muttering, muttering those accursed figures over and over again; I am afraid for him, my lass."

"And I too," said Viola, with a sob in her throat. "But what can we do? Carmelo and I would go and stay with him, but he will not have us; he thinks we are happier here."

"I am afraid for him," said Cecco. "He is made of stouter stuff than Nanni was, but the best pipkin breaks with much knocking and much fire."

"What can I do?" said Viola, in despair.

She would have gone through flame and water to help her grandfather, and would have borne any trouble to save it for him, but she could not tell what to do.

Sickness, sorrow, trial, burdens of poverty and pain, these the poor can understand well enough; they are familiar companions that have rocked their cradles and will go with them to their graves; but these oppressions, these exactions, these harassing debts that they are sold up for, yet which they know they never owed and never ought to pay, these bewilder them, break their nerve, and dull their brain.

Viola would have gone and besought the mercy of the Syndic, but she knew that she would only see his secretary.

She took a pilgrimage barefoot to a famous Madonna ten miles away on the hills, and there knelt and prayed humbly, and set up a candle in the

shrine, all glittering with ex-votos, and the gems and metals of similar devotees, and she asked nothing for herself; she only asked for the old man.

"For Carmelo and I are young," she said to herself, "and we love each other, and we are together: that is so much; we ought not to want any more."

Whilst she was still on her knees in the chapel on the side of the mountain, with the plain below like a sea, so grey was it with olive woods, the inspiration came into her to go and find the Prefect of the province at his own palace in the city.

It was to her as strange, as daring, and as distant, a travel as it would be to us to go through the terrible cañons of the Colorado, or scale the height of Chimborazo's summit. She had never been even so far as Pomodoro, and the mere thought of the great glittering city whose domes she could just see on the farthest edge of the plains, was one quite awful and terrible to her.

Nevertheless, when she came down in the twilight from the holy place, and met her husband at the foot of the hill, her mind was made up, and she said to him: "Our Lady has told me to go to the city and see the Prefect, and that there I shall find help for *Nonno*."

Carmelo would not say her nay, but he smiled a little bitterly.

"You may walk barefoot, my love, from here to Rome; nothing will avail, until the people write their rights in blood upon the soil that should belong to them."

Viola shuddered.

"Hush! That would be doing evil that good might come."

"It is what we must do," he answered gloomily; and they spoke but little more, as they trod the long tedious ways between the stone walls and the cropped trees.

A day or two later she had her way, and her father-in-law drove her to the city. Carmelo stayed within the mill.

She had put on her grey gown that she was married in, and had an amber-coloured handkerchief tied over her raven locks. She looked very pale, but she was a beautiful woman in all the charm of youth, though careworn, and too grave for her few years.

They started very early—at dawn, indeed—for the sake of Bigio, and the way seemed very long; Viola's heart beat hurriedly, and with fear and hope alternately, as she saw the great marble dome of the basilica of Santa Maria, famous in history and in art, rise with its golden cross higher and higher, as Mont Blanc looms white across the foliage of the Val d'Aosta.

“And I will say a word for myself, too, if we get audience,” said the miller, as they drove under the massive brown gateway through the crowd of chattering people, and the market-carts waiting for the weighing and taxing of their goods.

Before the city can eat anything, drink any wine, burn any fuel, the country-folk who bring in what it wants are treated as contraband traders, and made to wait through vexatious hours of heat, or rain, or snow, as it may be, till they are taxed and fined. In this year of grace 1880, the machinery of the State is still so clumsy that it can devise no wiser means to maintain itself than to employ the antiquated dragon of the Octroi, which often obliges the people, and their horses, and mules, and cattle, and fowls, to wait all the long wet night in the highroad, so as to be ready against the opening of the gates. They have pulled down all the fine old towers and walls; but they keep up the barriers of the Gabella.

Viola was awed by the noise, the width, the height, the crowds around her, but she was scarcely sensible of any of the grandeur of the frowning palaces, the foaming fountains, the spacious bridges, the marble statues; all her soul and mind were absorbed in her errand. A great purpose gives a sense of invisibility.

Pastorini stabled the grey horse near the market place, and then they sought the Prefecture. There it was in the centre of a square, a grand, solemn, mighty place, that in olden times had been the abode of mighty men; half fortress, half palace, built in the thirteenth century and faced with variegated marbles, and with once gorgeous frescoes on its frieze.

The miller and Viola entered the vast courtyard where water was rushing from the open jaws of stone lions: the Italian peasant has nothing in him of the vulgarity of trepidation before greatness and its emblems; the instincts of liberty and art are in him, all stifled though they be, and he stands graceful and unabashed before a monarch.

They asked to see the Prefect: they were told his Excellency was out; what did they want? They were sent here, sent there, a servant saw them, a clerk saw them; they were indolently told to wait.

They sat down in the court; a janissary, splendidly clothed, and with a gilt stick, told them they could not sit there.

Pastorini knew that the Prefect had in his day been a soldier of liberty, that he was very liberal, even "red" in his opinions; that he had all the medals and ribbons of the wars of independence on his breast; that he was a trusted friend and ally of

that advanced Ministry which the party of Messer Luca Finti was always trying to dislodge: Pastorini had heard this, and he hoped much from this soldier in power. His own brother had died at San Martino; the miller was simple enough to think this must be a link to all the Liberali.

They went outside and sat on the stone ledge that ran round the pediment of the palace. They sat there one hour, two hours, three hours; then they grew faint; they went into a little by-street, and took a bit of bread, and a little wine; then they turned back to the Prefecture and sat there again. Troops went by, cartloads of flowers, carriages with fine liveries, a band passed playing, the great sonorous bells of the cathedral boomed over the city, the hours drifted on; still they waited.

So many hours had at last gone by that their patience, even the illimitable inextinguishable Italian patience, had begun to get ruffled. Pastorini had got up and gone so often to the gorgeous guardian of the doors to know if the Prefect had come home, that the functionary at last got angry and—*in irâ veritas*.

“His Excellency has never been out at all, simpleton,” said he. “But you do not suppose he or the secretaries are here for the like of you? Mercy alive! if once they began to see the public,

they would have the whole province here screaming. He has never been out, I tell you. He has got guests with him. He will now be coming out soon, because it is the time to drive in the park."

Pastorini went back to Viola.

"He is coming out soon," he said: "they told us a falsehood; we will wait and watch the staircase. We cannot miss him."

By this time all the long golden drowsy day was drawing near its close. Viola felt feverish and stupid; her head spun with the coming and going of the crowds, the noise of the carriages and carts, and the unwonted closeness of the city air. Her peachlike complexion grew yellow with the heat and fatigue, and her great eyes had a strained reddened look.

Presently there came into the courtyard a handsome equipage, with liveried servants and fine horses; it waited at the foot of the stairs. "Now is our time," said the miller; and he and his daughter-in-law stood up by the entrance.

In a little while there came down a lady very superbly dressed in surah of old gold colour and laces of price, and behind her a good-looking, smiling man, with long moustaches and a glimpse of ribbon at his buttonhole.

Breaking past the janitor of the gates the girl

rushed to the foot of the stairs; her father-in-law behind her.

"Oh, let me beseech of his Excellency to hear me," cried Viola, stretching out her arms with a piteous gesture; and his Excellency paused a moment on the lowest step.

"What is it, Cuccioli?" he said, glancing interrogatively over his shoulder to a slim young gentleman behind him, who was indeed his private secretary.

Cuccioli murmured that he did not know; he would inquire; and he looked unutterable furies at the porter.

Meanwhile Viola was sobbing so that she could not speak; and Pastorini, with his head uncovered, said beseechingly:

"Your Excellency, my brother died at San Martino! We are come——"

"Oh, a pension, a claim?" said the Prefect, lighting a long cigar. "Based on military service? My good friends, you must apply to the Minister of War. We have nothing to do with such things——"

"But I thought," stammered the miller, "I thought that as his Excellency fought himself——"

Now, unhappily, there were few periods of which it pleased the Prefect to be reminded so little as this period, far behind him, when he had been a

soldier of fortune. He frowned a little impatiently, and moved to get into his carriage; but Viola stood in his way.

"Oh dear, my lord," she pleaded; "if you would but hear me: my grandfather is such a good honest soul, and all he has is sold up, and he never owed anyone a penny, and he is going mad; and if the money could be got back——"

"Cara mia!" said his Excellency caressingly, because she was a woman, and handsome. "Believe me, these matters are not in my department. If I listened to petitioners I should be deluged with them. What is it you want? If it be a pension——"

"It is not a pension," said Pastorini. "It is the cruelty of the municipality, your Excellency. They have ruined me; taken my ground; never paid me; and this poor old soul of whom the girl rightly speaks has been treated——"

"Oh, I cannot hear anything of that sort," said the Prefect very decidedly. "The communes are autonomous. Whilst they are within the law no Prefect has any right to interfere in any way. Your commune, wherever it is, is self-governed: if you do not think it ruled well, change your Giunta; change your Syndic."

Which was as though he had said to one who

complained of bad weather: "Change the sun; move about the moon."

"But your Excellency——" began Viola and the miller in one breath.

"Make them understand this, my dear Cuccioli," said the Prefect with a wave of his hand towards the slim youth: then he smiled affably on the up-raised face of Viola, and hurried to rejoin his wife in her carriage: the tall high-stepping horses pranced rapidly from the court to the street, and he was gone.

His Excellency had had a rough time of it in those early wars, and he wanted to enjoy himself now. Why else were rewards given to men for public service?

The slim youth turned to Pastorini with the true official expression.

"It is quite beyond our department. No one can interfere with municipal administration. It is quite impossible. You have your Syndic. You must rely on him. Pray be so good as to remember in future that the Prefect never can have anything to do with any personal grievance."

"Who has then?" said the miller desperately.

"Well, no one exactly: you see the government of every commune depends on itself. Nothing can be more satisfactory. Each commune has the rule

it desires. Good day," said the youngster; and he too slipt down the steps, and went his way to saunter in the park, and turn his eyeglass on the ladies.

"We must go home, Viola," said the miller with a groan: he would not reproach her; but in himself he thought if the Virgin could not help them better than this she might as well reveal nothing. The cost of the horse's stabling and of their own noon-day meal was all that this pilgrimage in search of justice had brought to them.

Carmelo said nothing when he heard. He had guessed very well how it would be.

Viola stole down to her grandfather's in the moonlight, weary and worn out though she was, and made a little supper in a little earthen pot; her tears falling all the while.

"It is a hundred scudi they have taken from me in all," said Pippo to her for the five hundredth time, following the old mode of coinage that he had been used to as a lad, and which indeed country people most naturally use still.

"I know—I know!" sobbed Viola.

"A hundred scudi; it would buy a cow," muttered the old man, with his hands set on his knees, and his eyes fixed on the boiling pot. "I am sorry to hear you are with child, my dear;

there'll be no bit nor sup for it when it grows up; and it will have to sweat, and toil, and hunger, and then at the end they'll sell the bed from under it. That is what they'll do."

Viola could not see the burning charcoal nor the little brown pot, for the thick mist of her tears.

It was true: what use or joy was there in the children coming to the birth to know only pain, and privation, and hard injustice of God and man?

In this lovely land that brims over with flowers like a cup over-filled, where the sun is as a magician for ever changing with a wand of gold all common things to paradise; where every wind shakes out the fragrance of a world of fruit and flower commingled; where, for so little, the lute sounds and the song arises; here, misery looks more sad than it does in sadder climes, where it is like a home-born thing, and not an alien tyrant as it seems here.

Then, whilst so lovely is the land, most unlovely does this tyrant make the homes of the poor; the alternate dust and mud of the roads, the greed-clipped trees, the human filth strewn over the fields as compost and putrefying in the sun, the dark, grimy, foul-smelling houses, the starved and beaten animals panting in the heat, or shivering in the cold; these all come in the train of this alien misery,

and are more horrible and comfortless here than anywhere else on all the earth. More so because, as you look on it all, you know that it is the greed of the State, and the greed of the landlord and his steward, which, working side by side, and striving to outwit each other, do it all. Get away from the grasp of these, and it is the Italy of our Raffaele still, and smiles as his child-Christ's smile, with a light on its face that is of heaven.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE months went on and brought the winter round and the spring. Things went ill at Santa Rosalia. The place was littered with dirt and lumber from the public works so nobly begun in it; the people did not dare say their souls were their own, with the guards striding up and down the roads and lanes, or watching from the wine-house windows; the tramway company had made up its quarrels with the Municipalities; monies had passed quietly from hand to hand; a few schemers had got the richer, and the rails had finally been laid two thirds of the way, and soon would be completed; the diligence man said he would cut his throat come Pasqua, and no one was

content except Messer Gaspardo Nellemane who found all the new laws and new inventions working well, from the steam-mill that poured its black vapours down the once bright Rosa water, to the mendicancy clauses which had cleared the land of some scores of useless old people.

Messer Nellemane, sitting behind his desk, felt that he had in him the soul of a statesman. In his mind's eye as in a magic mirror, he beheld himself already at Montecitorio, already with his portfolio, demanding a hundred millions for military manœuvres, and increasing the grist tax by an added third.

He was only a clerk, it is true; but what of that? He had studied to perfection the modern science of success, and he knew that he had in himself all the modern requirements for eminence. Already the prefect and the sub-prefect had murmured to him, "You are wasted here, you shall not be forgotten;" and already Luca Finti had promised him, "When we are in office you will be remembered."

Here in the little room of the communal palace, with his maps around him and his piles of papers before him, Messer Nellemane, though his imagination was slow, was almost deluded into imagining himself a minister already; and his fancy leapt at a bound the stairs he had still to climb.

Besides, Messer Luca Finti, with his father-in-law, were bringing into notice a scheme for turning the catacombs of Rome into an underground railway; he had got a syndicate of Jew, American, and Scotch bankers to consider the matter, and he could trust to his own party's power of worrying the Government into a concession. The sale of concessions is as flourishing nowadays in Italy as ever was of yore the sale of indulgences, and Messer Nellemane, in a strictly private manner, had been associated in this great project which promised well, as it was thoroughly adapted to the temper of the hour.

There was a fine flavour of desecration and utilitarianism about it which would be quite certain to take with the Press and the Bourse. All the *Liberi Pensieri* would be delighted at the use made of the early Christians. To an age which has decided that martyrdom was a kind of hysteria, and faith a sort of meningitis, there would be something peculiarly fascinating in making of SS. Gianetta and Basilla a booking-office, and of St. Hippolytus a junction. To drive an air shaft and a cork-screw stair straight through the soil that Scipio and Gracchus trod, down into the twilight, where the ashes of S. Agnes and S. Felicità rest, would be an enterprise full of peculiar sweetness and suitability to a generation that submits to the March Decrees,

Irish murders, Cook's parties, the pickelhaube, wooden nutmegs, and Paul Bert.

Europe, as it is at present constituted, would be seduced in a second at a prospect that would turn the Quattro Santi into a chief station, and make of the Callimachus—last resting place of so many martyrs and early popes—a dépôt for the goods-trains.

Messer Luca Finti knew the motto of his generation was a paraphrase of Voltaire: "Souillez, souillez, souillez! Toujours quelqu'un gagnera!"

And when M. Jules Ferry is a Minister, and M. Herold lives in the Louvre, why should not Messer Nellemane be a statesman and Messer Luca Finti date his letters from the Consulta or the Palazzo Braschi?

The deputy had that first and most useful of all talents: he knew how to hit the tastes of his own times, and he foresaw that the Catacomb Metropolitan would be a name to seduce the world and sell a million *actions*. He had paid Messer Nellemane the great compliment of divulging this grand scheme to him, and even employing his command of florid language in the composition of a prospectus. Messer Nellemane had proved himself equal to the task, and was assured he should be entitled to preference shares. He felt that he was already passed many

milestones on the high road to public greatness, and when he slept at night dreamed of portfolios and grand cordons.

As for his passion, he had conquered it with that strength of will which was his characteristic. Messer Nellemane was nothing if not moral; when Viola Mazzetti had wedded another, he had said to himself virtuously that it would never do to compromise his career; besides, after all, she was very thin, and her mouth was rather large, and she had been only a common, hard-working girl: so he dismissed her memory and saw her reality pass by him without emotion. But passion departing left hate behind it; the not uncommon ashes of unholy fires.

His love was a short-lived thing, but his hate smouldered on, unquenchable.

The little square house with the blue and white Madonna was a blot in the landscape to him. True, he had accomplished much against it; the mill smoke drowned it night and day in black vapours and foul smells; the tramway cars would plunge right across its very doorway, and to lay their rails down, the trees of the bank that had shaded it were felled; inside it all was bare and desolate.

Yet the sight of the little old man sitting on the threshold weaving his rush-work was to the eyes of

Messer Nellemane as the vineyard of Naboth to the great king. Old Pippo was not crushed into the earth, his sturdy little spirit was not stamped into the dust; he was very miserable indeed, and his brain was dull and his hand infirm; but still he lived on, and seemed to the irritated pride of the ruler of Vezzaja and Ghiralda to have an insolent and jeering pertinacity of existence.

As Messer Nellemane sat this day before his desk, he perused some long law papers with satisfaction: "a quarter of a year more," he thought, "and that stubborn old fool will know what mockery of the State costs people."

For through all these months he had not been idle. He had been on the contrary constantly employed in the affairs of Pippo; constantly engaged in the courts of Pomodoro in the old rebel's affairs; the impudent brook still ran across the road, and the impudent old man still existed: but in three months Messer Nellemane promised himself that the law should be respected.

Law is a slow and complicated luxury to indulge in everywhere; in Italy it is especially so, but Messer Nellemane loved it, and in this great love knew how to caress it and cajole it, so that it became for him a pliant and almost quick-footed thing. He had not been clerk in a notary's office without learning

how to get on the right side of the Law, and it was this knowledge especially which made him so efficient a public servant.

Now again and again had legal summons of all kinds been brought to Pippo, but he was all alone now; there was nobody to see what he did, and he lit a match and burned all these papers and chuckled as he did so. "They can't get bark off of a peeled pine," he said to himself. "They may call, and call, and call; they won't get nought any more out of me."

And the simple old soul thought that if he did not answer, they would get tired of calling, and he never knew the nature of these many documents.

"It is all along of the water," he said to himself, and thought so; but what could he do to the water? "And I would not do anything if I could," he said obstinately, as he sat all alone.

One day Cecco the cooper said to him: "You have never paid your interest on your mortgage, have you, Pippo?" and the old man answered him: "Not I; he will have the house after me; where is the harm? I have not got any money to pay with, he knows that; if I get a bit and drop, and a snip of tobacco in my pipe, it is all as I ever can do: lawyer knows that."

Cecco scratched his head thoughtfully; he was

afraid. He did not understand these things, but he knew that Pippo's name was often spoken at Pomodoro, and he was afraid, Pippo gave him no heed; he understood even less than his friend, and it was of no use at his age to learn, he said angrily.

"My house is my house," he said doggedly. "They will get it when I am dead. They can't get it before."

So he believed.

Hypothec was as Greek to him, and of all that these law-papers said which rained in on him, and which he burned, he had no idea. He could go about, and he could make his wickerwork, and he could do his little bit of cooking and mending, but he grew rather childish, and no one could make him understand things.

He had left off going to mass.

When the priest sadly reproved him, he said always: "I don't see as any one of them cares about me."

By them he meant the Trinity in which he had been taught to believe, and all their holy army of angels, of martyrs, and of saints.

"For sure nobody ever would disturb you, and you nigh seventy," said Cecco the cooper a little uneasily, for he had heard rumours that had troubled him.

"Disturb me? what mean you, you ass?" said Pippo hotly. "The house is mine, it is all mine. I pay no man rent. I thought it would go, when I die, to my girl, but I suppose now it will go to the lawyer. He will want something for his money."

"But if they should take the house?" said the cooper, very timidly.

"Take it?" said Pippo fiercely. "Take it? you long-shanked fool. How can they take it? It's mine, and I carry the key on me always when I go out. Take it! one would think 'twas a basket of eggs."

The cooper said no more, being a shy soul, and not at best clear as to what he had heard, or what were the measures and powers of law. Pippo was huffed, and would not speak of the matter any more. He went and dug in his garden where the almonds were once more in bloom over Raggi's grave.

His head felt queer whenever he stooped, and his ears had always a sound in them like bees swarming, as he said himself; but he would never complain, and he managed to keep his bit of ground tilled, and in order. "'Tis mine till I die anyhow," he said fiercely, as he struck in his spade.

Meanwhile, at the house of Pastorini things

were nearly as bad as with him. With the unequal rivalry of the steam mill no water-mill could compete, and all that the year had brought to Carmelo's people were debts, and the promise of a new inmate in the shape of a small swaddled child.

"Your children will come on sad times," said Demetrio Pastorini to his son; "God knows whether they will find a crust or a drop of goat's milk."

A great despondency had fallen on the mild and mirthful man; he grew helpless and weary, only not apathetic, because of his strong affections for those about him. The accursed iron rails had been laid down on the ground where his trees had been, but no money had been paid to him.

They knew very well that he could not go to law to command it, and that if he did there would be long delays granted to them, for they called themselves "public utility," and so claimed public respect.

Like the Duca di Ripalda before him, he saw his trees carried away to fill the furnaces of factories or rot in ship-yards, and never received a penny for them from the law.

All destruction is condoned under the parrot phrase of "public utility."

To the municipal mind of Italy all that is new

and artificial is good; all that is old or natural is worthless. They say of Rome like M. Cardinal: "C'est une ville à faire disparaître de la surface du globe. Je n'ai jamais vu Chicago, mais je préfère Chicago."

The great wheel of the Pastorini mill was motionless on nine days out of ten, for there was no work; novelty and expediency alike took the neighbours to the iron wonder of Remigio Rossi.

Cesarellino, the next son to Carmelo, came home from his conscript's service much the worse for it, as country lads usually are; they go away innocent, homely, laborious, dutiful youths, and they return from the camp and the barracks too often vicious, lazy, discontented, contaminated by vice, and utterly unwilling to work.

"As well send a lad to the galleys as to the army," say the country people, and they are right.

You cannot take a man away from his duties for three of the most impressionable and important years of his life, or even for the lesser term of eighteen months, and expect him to return to those duties the same docile and industrious creature that he was. He will have brought with him many a low sin, many a foul oath, many a vile memory; he will be unhinged, moody, good for little; that conscription does not make a blackguard of every lad

that falls under its curse is due to the good and kindly temper of the nation, not to the system, which is a very factory of devils.

Cesarellino, coming home to the mill, with bad words in his mouth, coarse talk on his tongue, and a nature for ever stunted, soured, and vitiated, added to the gloom of the household; the youngster had seen Milan and Turin, and was disposed to be insolent and contemptuous of the stay-at homes. Now that Cesarellino was home, the third son, Dante, had to go; he was a gentle, timid lad, and suffered greatly.

"What a pack of slaves we are!" said the father bitterly. "Has a man not a right to refuse the flesh and bone he begot to the makers of war?"

"There is no war going on, father," said the returned conscript with scorn for his father's ignorance.

"Then where is the excuse to take our boy from us?" said the old man. "Nay, nay, we are a pack of slaves! no better that I see for driving away the *stranieri*."

But kicking against the pricks was of no avail. The drawing of the year had given Dante a bad number; there was no money to buy a substitute, if even they had dreamed of such a thing, and the poor little fellow went off weeping like a girl.

"If it were not for Viola," said his eldest brother, "if it were not for Viola, I would wish I were of the age to go in his place, I would do it."

"But Viola you have, as you wished to have her," said his father, "and many children, I daresay, you soon will have too; you must do your duty at home, my son. Would to heaven it had not been made so bitter to you. You have to eat fennel with sour bread, but you must bring a man's courage to it."

"I lack not courage, father," said Carmelo simply. Then with an effort he added:

"What cuts me to the quick, is to see the old man so poor and ill dealt with; and you so tried, and the mill wheels motionless, and that rascal Bindo strutting to and fro as a cock on the green:—father, sometimes I fear me I shall never hold my hand off him."

"Yes, you will," said his father tenderly; "yes, you will for your wife's sake and mine. But you brood on these things too much, my lad. Thinking makes no bread."

"Thinking may make free men," muttered Carmelo; he dared not tell the miller all he dwelt on; all the schemes, and hopes, and views with which the German mechanic on his sickbed had filled his mind. Carmelo knew that down in the city there

were many of the same way of thinking as himself, and not long before he had received a secret bidding to join an association there that was a branch of the Figli di Lavoro: that international league to which no one pays any heed because it has so harmless a title.

All the nature of Carmelo, all the temper he had been born with, bound him to his native soil; to a simple and pastoral life, to innocent affections and pastimes, to the old roof-tree, and to the familiar ways and habits that had been his forefathers, as well as his.

The Italian is homely and strongly conservative, as I have said often before, and Carmelo, let alone, would have asked nothing better than to live and die as his grandfather had done before him, by the Rosa water. But it is the policy of Messer Nellemane to let no one alone anywhere; and the result is that the peaceful become restless, and the patient become restive, and in the stead of content there is rebellion, or at the best a profound if impotent disaffection.

What would Mazzini say if he were living?

I believe he would curse the *oppressor rusticorum* as he never cursed the Austrian or the Frenchman, the soldier or the priest.

We put up statues to him, but we forget this.

CHAPTER XVII.

ALL those papers that Pippo thought he abolished by burning them as he lit his pipes, were rising in a heap over him, in truth, at Pomodoro, till they grew into a mighty mound of contumacy, and under this pile justice required that the contumacious one should be buried alive.

In a word, as he did not appear and did not reply, and no one appeared or replied for him, the lawyer who had his mortgage, and the lawyer who acted on behalf of the municipality, had it all their way, as no doubt they would have managed equally to have if he had appeared and had replied; and after the many ceremonies and formalities of the law had all been observed, he knowing nothing of it all the while, due notice was sent him that his property would be sold to satisfy the just demands of the mortgagee, and of the debts due by him to the commune for works not done by him, and repeated contraventions and fines for the same, all unpaid for a term of eighteen months.

But as this notice also took the form of a paper half printed and half written, and was delivered by

the Usciere, Pippo twisted it up, set light to it, and pushed it blazing and smouldering under the little earthen pipkin containing his dinner, then boiling on the fire.

He was no wiser than before.

The lawyers and Messer Nellemane had had a great deal to do at Pomodoro in this matter, and all the engines and battering-rams of the law had been set in motion against the poor little house by the river, but Pippo knew nought of it.

"They can't get bark out of a peeled pine," was all he said; and when the man of law left these long papers upon him, with all their formidable array of writing and printing that he could not read, he set light to them and thought that was an end.

"They will tire before long," he thought. "They can't get anything more out of me, and they'll give over."

Pippo often went days on only a bit of bread, and once passed twenty-four hours without eating at all; but he shut up his pains in his own breast and would not take them to worry the girl: she was always the girl to him.

To Carmelo he did speak a little, for he and the young man were victims of the same torturer.

"Lord's sake, lad," he said one day, "when I

was a middle-aged man, even so near as that, the land was all at peace and fed us all. Wine—why you could get it for the asking, or buy it for a soldo a flask. Bread—ay, there was bread for the dogs and the pigs then; loaves were as thick as stones in Rosa's bed. We were all quiet and happy. The gentlefolks didn't go roaming away to foreign parts, and didn't dine nigh midnight as they do now. They all got their dinners at three, and there was plenty for a hundred, if a hundred came by and wanted sup and bite. They bided in villa all summer, and they went down to their own city, whichever it was, for winter. Oh, lad! Then the cities were alive and pretty, with all the money spent honestly in them, not taken out to this, that, and the other foreign place as it is now. All the old feasts and fairs were kept, and the laughing and dancing all winter, and the pranks and bravery of Carnival kept the cold out, and, Lord! on a holy day, what poor soul denied himself a chicken in his pot. It cost but two soldi. Now a chicken—why you might almost as well talk of getting down the moon to eat. The fowls are packed off to foreign parts, and here we all are starving. Can you tell me the right of it?"

"I can tell you the wrong of it," said Carmelo, his mind reverting to all the German communist

had told him. "The pot has boiled till all the scum is up; the knaves are saddled on us because they bellow 'Liberty!' while they cudgel our bare bones. As our gentlefolks don't care how we starve so long as they go and cut a figure in Parigi, so the knaves don't care how we perish so long as they get soldiers and ships, and put money in their purses."

"I suppose that's it," said the old man, not much the wiser.

"I know twenty years ago there was a rare screaming about 'Italy for the Italians;' and who's got Italy now?—the Jews," said the elder Pastorini. "Jew here, Jew there, Jew everywhere; and the poor sicken and die, and what d—d Jew dog of them cares? It is all the fault of the gentlefolks; they flare through their money to look fine, and then, when they're all burning up to waste, the Jews come in behind them. I never knew much, but that I do know. Look at what the old Marchese was, Palmarola, I mean; every soldo spent by him amongst his own people, and every hour spent by him here on his own soil. What's his son? A monkey-looking thing that scarce ever comes nigh his land, squanders all he gets out of it in Rome, or that place you call Parigi, and is whittling away every bit of the old property in gaming and harlotry,

and trying to look like a foreigner. It's all the fault of the gentlefolks. Why didn't they send them adrift with the *stranieri*?"

"Ah," said Pippo. "Palmarola died in time; it would have broken his heart to see that youngster, always dwelling with foreign folks, and keeping bad women, as they say he does. And what a fine-looking man was the old Marchese, and what a shrivelled-up looking *monellino* is this youngster! It seems to me as if the men now were all so small——"

"Of course they are," said the miller. "They smoke at fourteen, and they keep bad women as you say, at sixteen, and they gamble all night long, and they drink strong spirits to get their courage up in the morning. Of course they are weaklings, that is all that the foreign craze has done for our nobles. And those who don't do that, are like Count Saverio there in the town; all they think of is buying scrips and stock, and they would sell the Madonna herself to get a share or two in a foreign railway, or be the first to suck the gilt off a bit of jobbery down in the city. But I don't know what we're to do; I have heard that the Inglese and the Americani have done it all, bringing in their mad ways and midnight dinners, and their craze for killing things: it maybe."

"I've heard tell the Inglese worship foxes. They're heathens then," said the cooper Cecco, timidly. "I never knew much about them."

"This I do know, for I have been told it," said Carmelo, scornfully, "that they're such poor shots that, if they want to hit a bird, it has to be shut up in a box, and let fly right in front of them! But, oh! father, not Inglese nor Francese nor anybody would be able to hurt our Signori if they bided at home as of old, and had human hearts in their breasts, and clean hands. But they have not, they have not! They will not trouble themselves about anything, unless it is to get money, and they give us over into the claws and teeth of the Impiegati as a shepherd gives over his lambs to the butcher's knife. They do not care whether we live or die. What they care for is their own ease, their foreign travel, the money in their bank——"

"I remember a chicken two soldi," said Pippo, reverting to his original thoughts. "Two soldi, and fine and fat; not a thing blown out just for market. And now they send all the poultry away by the rail."

Then he fell to recalling in silence all the easy plenty and merry, simple festivities of his youth, when black Befana had knocked at all doors at Epiphany and when the Maggioli had brought in the spring to every village.

Carmelo with a sigh got up in his cart and went on his way; he had some sacks of "torbo" (lignite), to leave at one of the very few farmers who still were bold enough to show friendship to the Rosa mill-house, and employed the young Pastorini in divers homely ways; the "torbo" was wanted for the threshing-machine that would soon be in motion on the hills; one of the "pillars of progress" that came to break up for ever the old gracious pastoral ways which were like pictures from the Bible, and, making labour less, make hunger more, and benefit the few to distress the many.

The farm was many miles off; on one of the green hillsides, clothed first with the olive, and higher with the umbrella-pine, that stretched along both sides of the plains through which the Rosa wound.

It could be seen from the valley, a long, low, white house with an old tower, and the pines standing all around and above it. The way to it was steep and long; a good, well-made Roman road of the ancient times when work was not "scamped," since engineers "scamping" it, would have been beaten with rods or hung to a cross.

The mule was fatigued, for the lignite was very heavy, and it had been fetched from Pomodoro.

Midway on the hill road Carmelo, who was by

nature merciful to beasts, checked the poor thing, lightened the cart of three sacks and set them down by the roadside, meaning when the mule had, thus relieved, climbed to the top of the steep slope facing it, to carry them up one by one on his own shoulders.

The road wound through wild scrub of myrtle, and cistus, and arbutus; young chestnut trees were growing in clumps; it was quite solitary; no one ever scarcely came there except a woodman, a sportsman, a hill hare, a fox, or a flock of goats.

Carmelo left the sacks by the wayside and began to walk up beside his mule, encouraging it in its toil with kind words and a bunch of sweet hill grass.

He was busy thinking: very simple, honest thoughts; of how best he could labour in the future for his own children, and his brothers and sisters, for Carmelo foresaw that, with six months more, the mill-house would most likely be no more over their heads, his father being no more able to pay his way. He had a stout heart and strong affections; he tried to think how best he could carry his father on his shoulders away from the peril; a humble Æneas bearing a homely Anchises.

He never saw coming through the myrtle and bay the figures of Bindo Terri and old Angelo; their

pistols in their hands: when they had any leisure from tormenting the public, they took a turn at shooting thrushes and merles.

"Stop!" shouted the rural guards.

Carmelo glanced up, grew red, then white, and continued to pace beside the straining mule.

"Stop!" thundered the officers of the law.

Carmelo for all answer went behind the cart, and pushed it to aid the mule.

The men went in front of the beast and checked it with a jerk; the incline was great; the cart recoiled, the mule reared, the lignite rolled most of it on the ground; it was with a great effort that Carmelo saved the animal and the baroccino from destruction. He clenched his hands and ground his teeth in his struggle not to resent and avenge the offence done him.

Bindo Terri, keeping his pistol at full cock stood in the middle of the road.

"You are in contravention," he said, with pert authority. "Your sacks are lying on the public road. It is an offence against the municipal police, See Art. XV. of Rule 103. Angelo, inscribe the dereliction."

Angelo opened his book and pretended to write. In real truth he wrote very ill.

Carmelo, whose heart was heaving and whose

whole body was shivering with rage, stooped over the fallen "torbo" and employed himself in thrusting it back into the sacks.

He would have given twenty years of life to have been able to wrench the pistol out of the hands of the murderer of Toppa, and blow his brains out on to the turf. But he remembered Viola, he remembered his father, he controlled the justice of his bitter wrath, and bore in silence all the insults and jibes of his tormentors. Tired at last, as they could provoke him to no retaliation, they left him alone with his mule and his fallen lignite and went away across the chestnut woods: the land lay within their beat, being within the commune of Vezzaja and Ghiralda.

The next day the Usciere served a summons on Carmelo, citing him to appear for contravention of the law in having obstructed the public road.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ANNUNZIATA, since she had come out of prison, had never been quite the same. What she had thought the dire disgrace of it had gone deep into her honest old soul, and had ploughed it up as vitriol ploughs the flesh.

"If my poor dead man knew!" she would say, with a burst of sobbing. It seemed to her as if she were branded with an ineffaceable infamy. But never would she allow she had been a beggar.

"Not I," she said, "I only take what they give me. I never beg."

All the winter she was very quiet; quiet perforce, because her old enemy of the "rheumatics" seized her and pinned her down on her low pallet-bed. Carmelo and Viola and the Pastorini children did their best for her, and the old women in her room were always sisterly and kind, though racked themselves with nearly every ill that flesh is heir to; and in her exceeding joy at being at home in that cold tumbledown corner of a room again she was quite content, and bore her pain and nibbled her bit of bread cheerfully, Dom Lelio being as usual good to her, and going with a patched cassock and a rusty hat that he might spare from his meagre means for all those who had nothing.

No doubt it seems a very stupid and incredible thing, but old 'Nunziatina was happy so long as she could see those four walls and the square casement, that was filled with the poplar boughs, and hear the other old women chatter, and chatter too, and see the scrap of charcoal in the copper-pan warming the pipkin of bread-soup. Yet it is a fact,

and it is a fact also that life, which goes out of youthful queens, and bright children, and cherished heirs, who have all done to save them that wealth and science and love can dream of, often keeps itself alight in these old, worn, and half-starved frames.

"You must never go about, dear, again to the villas and the farms," said Viola, weeping, to her. "They will be on you again if you do. You know they think it begging."

"I never ask for aught," said Annunziata sturdily; "I take what they give me."

And for her life she could not see that she did anything amiss.

All the winter she had kept perforce quiet from her rheumatism, and Viola begged and prayed her so that even when the tulips were all yellow in the fields and all the force of old instinct and old habit moving her, she still kept within doors, or only just went and sat under the deep shade of the old ilex that had the shrine set in its trunk.

She cared not at all for the municipal laws, this old rebel, but she cared to please the girl, as she still called her, "who was getting so near her time that one can't cross her," she said to her four old friends in the little room.

And indeed with the March tulips Viola's little

son came into the light of the bright spring days, and promised to resemble his father in his big blue eyes and fair complexion, and was a happy little child that seldom cried.

This child was a source of great occupation and absorbing interest to its old great-grand-aunt, and 'Nunziatina spent most of her time at the mill-house with the little closely-swaddled bundle on her knees.

But also, indirectly, it was a reason for her to be more restless, and to wander a-field again; for she said to herself that now there was a baby, and no doubt dozens to follow, and so much trouble and straits at the mill-house on the Rosa, she could not and would not rob them of so much as a bit of bread, when all the people on the hillsides and down in the valley farms would be willing to give to her out of their plenty.

Carmelo and Viola endeavoured to make her understand that this taking of free gifts was her offence in the eyes of the law, but they could not succeed. She could not understand that she did anything wrong, and the habits of forty years could not easily be shaken off her daily life.

"I only take what they give me," she said persistently.

By vigilance and persuasion they kept her in a

few weeks, but their lives were too full of work for them to have leisure for perpetual watching. "I never did do a bit of harm," she said to herself, and she could not stay indoors this bright weather of the opening summer, and though she left her basket at home, as they told her to do, she began to wander about as of old. She was much weaker than of yore, and, like Pippo, her head buzzed.

"It's always like the bees in the acacia trees," he and she agreed, sorrowfully. She did not readily comprehend what was said to her, and she confused names and dates. "I want to be in the air," she said to the old women, her companions in her little square room. "I have always been in the air all my days."

So she took her stick and trotted hither and thither, and naturally her feet, of their own accord, wandered into the old familiar paths, and up to the old houses. All her old friends at the farmhouses were delighted to see her, and gave her bit and drop as she wanted it. She would not take anything home.

"No, they tell me not; the dear lad who took me out tells me not," she said always, and all she would do was to eat a plate of soup, and drink a little *mezzo-vino* when it was offered her. Her brown wrinkled face, all crinkled up like a walnut shell,

had lost its mirth; her mouth often trembled, and she had grown very deaf; but she was as sensible as ever to kindness, and brightened up under it.

She was a picturesque little figure still in her round black hat, and her clothes that were made of all colours, and of odds and ends that had been given her.

One day, when Viola's boy was some three months old, and the weather was growing sultry, she had been up in the hills to a *massaja**, who was very fond of her, and she had done some work up there with the poultry by way of payment for sitting and eating at the long table where all the contadini dined off macaroni and salad and broth, and on her way home was so tired that she sat down to rest above the village, on a felled pine by the edge of the hill-road.

There was a pony carriage coming slowly up it, and in it, with a servant, was the pretty foreign child with the blue eyes, who lived at Varammista. When the English child saw her, out she sprang, and came lovingly up to the old woman, her golden hair hanging about her shoulders.

"Oh, 'Nunziatina!" she cried to her, "We have

* The *massaja* is the woman (usually the wife of the *fattore* or bailiff) who is set over all the womankind on an estate and directs their labours.

been away all the year, and we are just come back, and we have heard you have been in prison. It is not true? It cannot be true?"

"Yes, carina; it is true," said Annunziata. "They took me the very day I was coming to bid you good-bye, and I had got a rose for you—such a beautiful rose. Yes, dear, I have been in prison, and perhaps your mamma would not wish you to speak with me."

"Oh, mamma *would!*" said the English child, with a quick breath of indignation. "You never did anything wrong? I am sure you never did."

"No, carina, not I. I took what they gave me, and they said that is begging. I never have understood it."

"Oh, what a wicked thing!" sighed the child, with her fair cheeks hot. "I will tell mamma. Do you come up to Varammista and see her, and, dear 'Nunziatina, I must not stop, because it grows dark so soon, but take this and come up and see us."

"Is it your own to give me, dear?" said Annunziata, holding the two-franc note with hesitation.

"Really my own," said the child. "You know I have so much money; and buy something nice with it, will you?"

"The saints bless you, carina," said Annunziata, "and I'll tell you what I will buy with it. I will

buy a little shirt or two for Viola's child, that was given to her when the daffodils blew."

"Oh, do!" said the child, "and you will come and see us soon, Annunziata; to-morrow, won't you? I will tell mamma all about you, and she will be so sorry, so sorry."

Then the glad little girl went away up over the hill, with her little rough pony, and the old woman went down it quite light of heart.

"I will buy something for Viola's child," she thought, and slipped the money in her apron pocket.

That night, when Carmelo drove through the village with some flour, Gigi Canterelli ran out of his shop and stopped him.

"Do you know they have taken 'Nunziatina again?" he said to him. "They say she was begging; they say they saw her take money on the hill yonder, just coming into the town; she is gone to Pomodoro."

Carmelo turned crimson, then pale.

"But I paid forty francs for her!" he cried; "I sold my watch."

"What has that to do with it?" said the grocer. "They have got her again. They will want eighty francs this time."

"How shall I tell Viola?" said Carmelo, and he

trembled like a girl. "Oh, my God! Oh, my God, Gigi!—when shall we get justice or pity?"

"My lad, we have big ships, and sham battles, and a hundred men in every office-door to kick us out when we ask a civil question," said Gigi Canterelli. "That is as much as we shall get for twenty years to come, I am thinking. Your mule is tired; I will harness my own beast, and go over and see where 'Nunziatina is. Go you home, and tell your wife to keep up her heart."

Carmelo thanked him, and drove to the mill-house with a bitter spirit, and a broken one; the old grocer did as he had promised, and went to Pomodoro.

There he found that the old woman had been taken by Bindo Terri, for the offence of begging for money on the road; she was in prison, and no one would tell him more, or let him see her. He returned to the mill-house and made the best of the sad facts that he could.

"To-morrow we will have her out," he said cheerfully to Viola. "Never you fear, my beauty. We will have her out. The foreign folk at Varamista will stand her friends, and we will all club together, somehow or other, if pay she must."

Now as officials, all the land over, are convinced that the public never should be told the truth on

any occasion—the public, in fact, having no business ever to inquire for it—they had not told the truth to Gigi Canterelli in the town.

Annunziata had been taken there by Bindo Terri, and told by him very sharply that nobody was ever let out after a second offence; she, for her part, was dumb with horror and amaze, and only found her voice when they took her two francs away from her as *pièce de conviction*, at which she screamed loudly.

“The little lady of Varammista gave it!” she shrieked, “and I am going to save it for Viola’s child!”

But no one attended to this; she was bundled away into the prison, and her case was to be heard in the morning. However, the Count Saverio chanced to see her, and took the matter into his own hands. He had always regretted that he had been cold to her; he was a man who set great store on his charitable reputation, and he knew very well that he had seemed very indifferent when they had worried him about her, just as he was in council with his stockbroker.

Now the Count Saverio was a man who was nothing if he were not charitable. He had made himself conspicuous solely by charity; it had been a career to him, and a successful one; these professors

of that divine virtue which covers a multitude of sin are common to every country. They may be said to flourish especially here, because there are so many fraternities and endowments in which they can plant themselves as snugly as a scolytus in an elm tree. So he saw an admirable investment in this old woman whom he had refused to assist, and he exerted himself so greatly, to the admiration of everybody, that he obtained her removal from the prison of Pomodoro to the Montesacro of the city.

The Montesacro was also one of those institutions which had come down from obscure ages, and had been illumined by the light of modern common sense. It had originally been a purely charitable asylum for aged folk, with large funds bequeathed by a pious prince, who was also an abbot. But the State had taken a good slice out of it at that illustrious period of the Birth of Liberty, when Garibaldi and others were driving Scialoja to madness by drawing cheques on the public funds every day, and this modernised Montesacro nowadays made perpetual appeals for assistance, private and public.

Most people said it was managed magnificently.

Count Saverio said so, for his cousin was at the head of it; a few grumblers averred that the frescoes had been cut off the walls of the vestibule and corridors, the oak seats of its chapel gone, nobody

knew where, and its altar-piece by Sodoma vanished from its place. A famous gold Reliquary, also, the work of Benvenuto Cellini, had disappeared: it was supposed to have been destroyed by rats.

But no one can help what rats may do, and these grumblers were not attended to, and Montescro was always pointed out to strangers as one of the features and glories of the glorious and lovely city. It was divided into two parts; it had youth which did a great deal of work that was sold for their support, and the profit of its direction; and it had age which served as a reason for all kinds of donations, subscriptions, bazaars, lotteries, and theatricals on their behalf. Count Saverio, whose cousin was director-in-chief of this beneficent asylum, had old 'Nunziatina carried there in the ambulance of his own fraternity, a coffin-like cart drawn by a weak old horse; and she was deposited on one of the narrow little beds of the dormitory, and expected to be grateful.

She was a stubborn old soul, and she was not so.

"What have I done, what have I done?" she screamed at every minute. "Let me get back to my home. Let me get back to my home."

For this silly old woman would persist in calling her corner in a room, with her bit of sacking for a bed, her home—*casa mia*.

She was in a long corridor, with those white-washed walls, off which the frescoes had been cut; there were some seventy iron beds all in a row; there were some lofty casements carefully blinded, with grey shutters, through which little chinks of light blinked, as a cat's eyes blink in the darkness; as long as she would live she would be set in one of these big rooms, have broth and bread found her, and be allowed to go outside once a fortnight for three hours.

Instead of being gratified and grateful, perverse old 'Nunziatina screamed till she was black in the face.

"*Casa mia! Casa mia!* Take me there. I am not a criminal. I won't be put in prison! I want the air, I want the sun. Take me to *casa mia!*"

If Messer Nellemane had been there, he would have had once more occasion to moralise upon the ingratitude of the poor.

A female likeness of him, who was there, gently gagged Annunziata without more ado, observing that discipline in an institute must be preserved at any sacrifice of the individual, and as the aged rebel tore at the gag with her hands, they tied those down to the bed rails.

Then the unwilling old woman was told that she ought to be piously thankful; tens of thousands of

little window, the sunny roads where her feet had carried her so many years, the green hillside where she so long had wandered, the broad blue radiant light, the rose of day-break on the plains.

You cannot cage a field-bird when it is old; it dies for want of flight, of air, of change, of freedom. No use will be the stored grain of your cage; better for the bird a berry here and there, and peace of gentle death at last amidst the golden gorse or blush of hawthorn buds.

When night came, and they made her go to her bed amidst all those other beds again, Annunziata was very cold; cold as marble. No one had been unkind, for she had been quite mute and passive all through this long dreary colourless summer day behind the grey blinds within the four walls.

"*Casa mia, casa mia,*" she murmured feebly, when they laid her down on the hard pallet: it was a stifling midsummer night, but she was still quite cold.

She was so cold that the woman in attendance called for help: there was no doctor near at hand, and the director was away at a dinner party of the Prefect.

They tried to put some warm drink down her throat but she spat it out; her lips began to grow blue, and her eyes fixed.

"Let me get out, let me get home," she muttered, with a tremulous voice. "There is no air here; I can't breathe——"

The women were not frightened, for they were used to death-beds in Montesacro; yet, awed to some show of gentleness, they lifted her up and opened a casement to let in the coolness of the night.

But Annunziata knew nought of that. She gasped for breath still, and the little life there was in her was chilling into stone. All at once she opened her eyes wide and forced herself free of their hold:

"Lord! let me see the sun again; let me see the hills!" she cried aloud, stretching out her arms; and in that last prayer she died.

Will she see the sun again, free from all cloud, a sun that never sets? Will something greater than ourselves, and more pitiful than the State, let that poor, dumb, tired little soul of hers arise and rejoice in the green hills of an everlasting world?

If this be the last of her, this death on a strange bed, in a prison that hypocrisy calls a refuge, then let us weep for her indeed; ignorant, valiant, true, busy, and most harmless creature, almost as dumb as the dogs, quite as cheerful as the birds, having borne heat, and cold, and hunger, and pain without complaint so long as she was free.

“Be good to me, O God, for my boat is so small and the deep sea is so wide,” is the prayer of the Bréton fisher. Alas, how many boats go down, and where is the pity of God?

CHAPTER XIX.

THE misery at this time grew yet greater at the mill-house; greater for this family, which had for so many centuries been the possessors of a homely abundance, than for those who by long usage were accustomed to hardship and penury. All Pastorini's savings had gone when Carmelo was in prison, and the mill brought in not a farthing. People who a few years before would have given him ten years' credit now did not like to trust him for a month. Popular favour is a fickle thing, and comes and goes alike without reason. He took the good grey horse to a distant market and sold it, being reluctant to keep it to want; the old mule he knew would soon have to follow; without grist to grind the mill only cost what it could not pay; the usciere began to call with summonses for trifling debts, for when one tradesman turns crusty, all turn so.

The little butcher Sandro had become bankrupt, and had disappeared from Santa Rosalia; the big

one, he who was in good odour with the municipality, would give nothing without money down on the nail. The old man was shrunk out of all likeness to himself; the baby alone throve in the midst of the desolation, and there was likelihood of another coming; more hungry mouths and no food for any of them was the future that faced Carmelo and his father. The summons for having encumbered the road with the sacks of *torbo* had been served on Carmelo, and as he had not appeared to answer it, and could not employ any man of law to dispute it, it was passed as a matter of course on to Pomodoro, where the Pretore, merely seeing that Carmelo Pastorini was in question, decided without further examination that his late prisoner had been at fault, and so the matter with fines, penalties for contempt of court in not appearing, &c., ran up to a matter of thirty-eight francs. As for looking for thirty-eight francs in the mill-house till, you might as well have looked for emeralds and rubies. After due course a *gravamento* was instituted for the payment, as it had been done with poor old Pippo; and Carmelo, possessing nothing of his own in the world except a gun, his clothing, and the little coral earrings he had given his wife in the bridal week, these were seized and taken off by the usciere. Carmelo laughed aloud when he saw the distraint warrant.

S32 9C S32

3 9G 23S 9G 23S 9G

S32 9C S32 9C S32 9C

23S 9C 23S 9C 23S 9C

"He set down three sacks on a hillside road to lighten the mule for a minute!" said his father piteously. But he himself said nothing. He only laughed till those were frightened who heard him. His father, without letting him know it, persuaded the usciere to take some of his own clothing instead of his son's. If he had still had the mule he would have sold that, but three months had gone by since the offence had been committed, and the mule had now gone to other masters, and the price of him and of the baroccino had bought food for the many mouths round the mill-house table.

Viola, who could do nothing, grew so wretched that she reproached herself bitterly for having married Carmelo; alone, she thought, he might have done better; he could have gone away, he would have had only himself to keep. It began to seem to her that she had done nothing but harm to all she loved.

When on this day of Annunziata's removal to Montesacro they heard only that she had been once more arrested, Viola felt her timid and patient soul grow desperate.

"Oh, Carmelo," she sobbed, "and it was they who killed Raggi, though I never told you!"

"Dear," said the young man with a bitter smile, "I guessed that long ago. These are the wretches

that have our lives in their keeping; dog-butchers, thieves, extortioners! The people are like the steer who goes peaceably to be murdered when he could toss and gore."

"But would it be any better if the people rose?"

"Who can tell?" said Carmelo gloomily. "I have heard say that twenty years ago, when they first drove out the *stranieri*, it was our people, the soldiers of the people, the leaders of the people, born out of them, who were the first to plunder and pillage all the people's treasuries. And how can we do anything; we who have no union, no chief, who cannot read, who can only struggle blindly just as the birds do in the nets? That is the misery of it. Our people are timorous. They scurry like mice before a uniform; they crouch and crawl before a drawn sword. Yet anything were better than this. It would be an easier death to be shot down by artillery than to be bled to death slowly like this, a drop every day."

"But what will be the end?"

"Who shall tell? This I do believe, that when they deal with us as with criminals for every little action of our days they will make us devils. If the army were with us, then, indeed—I have heard tell that the soldiers are muttering and growing restive;

but alas! there will be always men found who will point the cannon on the poor."

Viola listened, and understood enough to be alarmed and very disquieted for the safety of her beloved.

This day, made bold by the pains of what she loved, as does will be and mother-birds, she took heart of grace and resolved to essay a last chance for help and hope. It was a very faint one, and if she had not been a simple, ignorant, and most trustful creature, would never have dawned on to delude her for a moment.

As it was, she tied a handkerchief over her shapely head, took her little apple-blossom of a boy in her arms as a shield and prayer in one, and went straight, unknown to any of her family, towards the communal palace, and there asked with beating heart if she could see Messer Nellemane.

Now Messer Nellemane was growing very indifferent to Santa Rosalia; he knew very well that he would soon leave it for some higher official grindstone under which to squeeze the body-politic; and he was beginning almost to be high and mighty with his own master, the Most Worshipful the Cavaliere Durellazzo. Therefore he very seldom deigned to see any petitioner of the populace, and such were always dealt with now by the chancellor,

the conciliator, or Bindo. Nevertheless, when he heard that the wife of Carmelo, the granddaughter of Pippo, wished to see him, he bade her be shown in to him; Messer Nellemane not being one of those who believed in the virtue of women, had a sudden evil notion come up in his mind of what her errand might be. But she would come in vain, he said to himself; such philandering was not to be indulged in; ambition was his sole Venus; he knew the mischief that one weakness may work in a public career; he meant to go through life with a blameless, a snow-white morality. There is nothing more useful.

Nevertheless, he let her enter.

When he saw the baby in her arms he frowned, and his face flushed angrily; when Helen comes to woo, she does not thus cumber herself.

"Signora mia!" he hastened to say, however, with benevolent courtesy, "it is long since we met. I have been so much occupied. *Un bel bimbo davvero!* What is his age?"

Viola, trembling very much, and with her great dark eyes wide open and strained, took no heed of his words.

"I am come to beg you to be merciful to us," she said in a low gasping tone. "Sir, dear sir, we are in great wretchedness. My father-in-law is

ruined. My husband thinks of going to Maremma to work as a day-labourer. My poor old aunt is taken again, and my grandfather—oh, my grandfather—”

There her sobs choked her.

Messer Nellemane's black eyes shone with a pleasure he could not conceal, though all his features were composed into a regretful and sympathetic gravity.

“I am very pained at all this,” he said blandly. “I had heard something of it——”

“Oh stop, stop it! you can!” murmured Viola, her whole form trembling, and clasping the baby to her convulsively.

“I!” cried Messer Nellemane in amazement. “I! *cara mia signora!* What have I, what can I possibly have to do with the misfortunes of your relatives? Alas! would I could say they were altogether undeserved misfortunes, but when the law is obstinately set at defiance——”

“Oh, it is you!” cried Viola, forgetful of all wisdom, and borne away on the tide of her own strong feeling. “You rule all; at a word from you all is done or undone. 'Nunziatina would be left in peace, and my husband could stay in his own place, if only you would cease to persecute us.”

Messer Nellemane drew himself up, the most

rigid monument of offended dignity and unutterable surprise.

“Persecute?” he repeated; “persecute? *I?* Signora mia! you cannot know what you are saying! What am I here? nothing. The mere instrument of the will of the council and the syndic; the merest pen in the hand of an unblemished and most benevolent magistracy! You must see, if you reflect a moment, that the troubles of your relatives all arise from their own neglect of repeated warnings that, if they pursued certain modes of conduct, the law—the law which is absolutely impartial and impersonal—must take its course.”

“No!” said Viola, stung out of all prudence, and holding her little child close to her breast as she spoke. “No, no! these are all words. When I was a maiden you had wicked and cruel thoughts of me, and you have revenged yourself on me and mine. If I had taken your gifts, and hearkened to your dishonest wooing, you would have spared my grandfather and the Pastorini and the old woman, who has no sin in all the world except to belong to me!”

Offended majesty and insulted virtue reigned together on every line of Messer Nellemane’s countenance.

“You are mad, woman!” he said very sternly.

"How dare you use such indecorous language to me? I never saw you but twice, and then I regarded you as the betrothed of the youth Carmelo. Foolish fancies are not my foible. My time, like my heart, is in the service of the nation!"

Viola was vibrating and throbbing with passion. She scarcely heard him.

"It is because the dear old creature brought your presents back to you that you hate her, that you hate them all!" she cried with tremulous indignation and emotion. "It is because I feel they suffer through me that I know not how to bear to see them suffer. Carmelo and I can do well enough; we are young and strong, and we have love and health to bear us up; but the old people—the old people—and it is all because you hate them. It is all through me!"

"This is insanity!" said Messer Nellemane, lifting his hands. "It is worse: it is defamation! You are using the language of libel. All, I repeat, all, that has befallen your family is the simple and inevitable result of their inattention and disobedience to the laws of the land. Their contumacy has met with its natural, and I must say, however private compassion may plead for them, its just chastisement."

"Oh, hypocrite!" cried Viola, with her pale cheeks flaming as the sun flames in the west on an

autumn night. "I did ill to come to you. You have a face of brass, a heart of stone!"

"You are excited," said Messer Nellemane coldly. "I am sorry that you ever misconstrued my charity to a poor man's granddaughter. I should have hoped that innocent country maidens had had purer thoughts. I fancied that it was only women of light life who put evil constructions on simple courtesies! Your child is crying. Will you excuse me if I request you to leave me now?"

The child had burst out sobbing loudly. Viola pressed it to her bosom, and turned and left the room.

Messer Nellemane had been to the last victorious; he had made her feel an unwomanly, unwise, ill-spoken creature, who had fancied an unholy passion as existing in a mere commonplace and benevolent compliment!

Her cheeks burned; her hot tears fell.

"*O bimbo mio!*" she wailed to the wailing child. "Is it indeed only the law? Will the law follow us out into the sickly Maremma and seize our last crust there? *O bimbo mio!* if you were not so dear, so sweet, so fair, almost for your sake I could wish you had never been born!"

"What a fortunate thing I resisted my momentary infatuation for her," thought Messer Nellemane, left

alone with the prospectus and estimates of the Catacomb Metropolitan. "Really she has grown quite plain, and how very painfully thin! If factories were established, there would not be this class of useless, hungry, most unhappy women."

And he stretched out his hand and unearthed from the mass of the Catacomb circulars a plan for the Giunta to turn the old Convent of S. Francesca Romana into a manufactory: it would be hideous, it would pollute the river, and it would bring to the municipality a clear forty per cent. per annum. What could be more public-spirited?

CHAPTER XX.

THIS night that Annunziata died, Carmelo and his father were sitting up by the light of a three-branched lamp, and poring over their accounts. They kept these ill; they could make clear figures, but the miller wrote ill, and the young man, who had always been lazy in these matters, could not write at all.

Still, even their scanty education enabled them to perceive very clearly that the miller was deeply in debt, and that, unless things mended, they would share the fate of Pippo. And there was no chance

that they would mend; the steam mill would every month take more and more. Santa Rosalia did as bigger societies have done a million times, and followed self-interest and the breeze of the hour.

The father and son felt this bitterly; both had fancied it would have been otherwise, for they were simple enough to expect that, as the whole village hated the *oppressor rusticorum*, the whole village would have courage to show their hatred; neither of them had great knowledge of human nature, and both had simple and trustful characters.

"Who could have thought all our folks would be so mean?" muttered Pastorini.

"They are taught to be mean," said his son. "They are ruled by a spy and a sergeant of police. What would you? All the fault is with the government."

Pastorini sighed; he was thinking of all his dead brother had fought for; he did not understand politics, but it seemed hard.

Carmelo had his elbows on the table, and his face was resting on his hands. The yellow light of bad oil, the dregs of the oil-jar, flickered on his hair and on the papers before him. It was midnight; Viola was upstairs; the moon shone in through the kitchen lattice.

"Father," he said abruptly, "it is no use my

staying here; I cannot help you; I only do you harm. Alone, when Dina is married, there will be enough perhaps for you, and Cesarellino and the girls; and the others, when they are grown up, will do for themselves after they have gone through the hell which they call soldiering. Father—never did I think to do it, but I see now that I must. I will go away, and try and work elsewhere, and my girl will go with me, and perhaps the old man, for he will lose his mind where he is——”

“Go away? You? The eldest son?”

Demetrio Pastorini grew ashen white, and his breath came shortly; never in all the course of the centuries had the eldest son gone from the mill.

“It will be best so,” said Carmelo, sadly; “there is not enough for us all. There is ruin here,” he added, striking his fist on the book. “Unburdened, may be you may pull through it. As for me, I am strong, I can do anything in the way of work.”

“A *bracciante!*” groaned his father.

“A *bracciante*, if need be,” said Carmelo. “I will go into the Maremma next month. There is plenty of work there, they say. I do not know rightly where it lies, but one can ask. I have no money to go over seas, or else I would. But anyhow, I have a strong arm. I will not let Viola starve, nor her children when they come, nor the old man

if he will trust himself with us. You will let me go, father? You will not say nay?"

Carmelo, if his father had forbidden him, would never have stirred; he was as obedient as though he were still a child; in those old homely families, the old homely virtues linger.

Demetrio Pastorini was silent: his mouth was quivering with an emotion he repressed:

"Do what your conscience tells you," he said huskily. "I would not check you, not I; I have nought for you at home but bread, broken with bitterness. And yet—O Lord—the pity of it!"

Then the old man laid his grey head down on the table and wept.

He would not say that it would not be best for his son to breathe another air than Bindo Terri; but it cut him to the quick. For so many years he and his had dwelt here, father and son, one after another, the old broad house-roof sheltering all. That his eldest born should be driven out like an Ishmael, and be forced to wander and work on other land than the place that had given him birth, seemed so terrible to him that, for the moment, he thought that he would sooner see Carmelo dead upon his bed. Yet he would not say him nay.

"Go if you will," he said to him. "When the

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trees went, I knew the luck of the house went with them. As for me, I shall soon be no more."

"Nay, nay," said Carmelo gently. "It is I who bring ill-luck to the house. Our honest hearth should not have a gaol bird by it. Cesarellino will be better master here after you than I, father. Though I lived for fifty years, they would never take the iron out of my heart, nor the blot from off my name."

His hands clenched as he spoke; and in his soul he cursed those who had cursed him.

He panted to be gone: it wrung his very heart-strings to leave his own land, to think that he should live no more by the water that had sung to him since, in his babyhood, he had pattered in its shallows with rosy tripping feet; yet he thirsted to be gone.

He feared at every moment that rage would master him, and some utterance, or act, of it again fling him to his foes. The glance and the gibe of the guards, the estrangement of old comrades, the sight of the waste ground by his father's house, the shrug with which the youngsters went away and left him on the first Sunday afternoon when he had gone to take up his old place on the *pallone* ground, the sufferings of old Pippo and of 'Nunziatina; all these things were to him as is the fly in the galled

side of the horse. He was afraid of what his pain and rage might make him do.

He was very young, and he panted for a fresh field, a free life, a place where he could work and play without a neighbour's pointed finger and an enemy's jeer.

He was very ignorant, and knew nothing even of other communes than his own; but he said to himself that anything was better than bringing ruin on his father; and he felt that he had strength in him to cut a new road out for himself, and get bread for his wife and the old man. He thought that somewhere there must always be bread enough for a willing labourer.

So little did he know, so little did even his own poverty make him realise, the poverty that gnaws tens of thousands of empty bodies in this land, eaten bare by the locusts of the State.

That night Carmelo sat up long by the little window that looked over the river, talking to his wife of this new hope of his. Viola had never heard of Ruth; but Ruth's heart throbs in every loving woman, and she said in her own way, "Where thou goest I will go."

"But grandfather?" she said, almost as soon as the idea of flight to other land had ceased to scare her, for another province to her was stranger than

it would be to us to go to lands behind the sun, could we get there.

"We will take him with us," said Carmelo stoutly. "Nay, sweetheart, never would I ask of you to leave him. They are driving him mad here amongst them. We will persuade him to trust to us."

"I think he never will come away," said Viola with a sigh. "His very life does seem as if it were wedded to those stones, as the roots of an aloe are fixed to the rock——"

"Dear love," said Carmelo bitterly, yet tenderly. "They will soon tear him off those stones, I fear. The beasts will never leave him in peace, and besides the house is mortgaged."

"Then, perhaps, he would come," said Viola, "only he is old; you cannot get new ideas into him any more than you can get new resin into a dry pine. And there is 'Nunziatina too."

"Father would let her live here," answered Carmelo; "I know he would; he is so good; and she would have our bed and our share at table."

Viola kissed him with tender passion.

"As long as father lives he would always find a crust to keep an old woman out of prison," said Carmelo. "And to-morrow, Viola, I will go over and tell her so; and perhaps they will let her come

out if I promise she shall never go again on the highway. I have no money."

She kissed him again; and as they leaned there one against another, looking at the white moonlight on the Rosa water and the bats that were flying in and out of the ivy upon the wall, they were almost happy.

"If," murmured the young man, "if we can only go where we can get bread enough to eat, Viola, and where your children will never hear that I was once in prison. Not but that I would do the same over again; just the same; yes. Poor Toppa!"

There is a great fair in August in Santa Rosalia; a cattle fair, a horse fair, and a merry-making all in one, that is always opened by a service and procession of the church.

It comes once in three years, and so does not lose its attraction from too constant repetition. It lasts two days, and all the country folk for twenty miles round come to see it.

There used to be at this gathering only good chaffing and good fellowship, followed by blameless mirth; now there is often a good deal of quarrelling, in which the knife is arbiter, and a good deal of drunkenness, for people's tempers are on edge in these days, and the wines and other drinks

at the caffès are not wholesome and unadulterated, as they were before shopkeepers had to pay such taxes that they must recuperate themselves by cheating.

The preparations had been already made for this fair, and the booths and the flags enlivened the dusty piazza, and there were already groups of bullocks, white, dun, and grey, shaggy ponies and lean asses, bearded rough shepherds, and goats as bearded and rough, and lean sheep that fed on what they could crop by the road-sides; and little, indeed, is that, in these days, when the communal regulations forbid the poor creatures ever to pause in the highway.

The place was full of movement, sound, and laughter, and the noise was increased by the lowing of the cattle, and the braying of the asses, across which sounded now the chimes of San Giuseppe, and now the bells of San Romualdo.

In other years there had also pealed from across the river the beautiful, solemn, deep tones of the convent bells, but they were gone far away; they had been melted down into cannon which rusted on bastions that no one ever dreamed of attacking.

Carmelo, going towards the house of the Madonna to see how Pippo fared, had a heart less heavy than it had been since his return.

He had talked with the cattle drivers and the shepherds, and all had told him something of different places; he had also met with a horse dealer, bringing in a string of young horses from the Maremma, and he had asked the road from this man, and had been assured that a strong young fellow was always welcome in the woods there all winter. It was very far away, and very vague, but still it comforted him.

Here were men who came from the place he had thought of, and told him he might find bread there; what they related of the wide, marshy plains, of the great blue sea, of the dark forests of pine and chestnut, sounded to him wide, and fresh, and alluring. Surely, he thought, there would be no petty laws there to sting at you all day long, like a mosquito swarm in a swamp.

He was so young that any touch of hope was enough to lift him from earth like wings; he thought he would make haste to tell the old man; it would be hard, he knew, to get Pippo away from his little square house, but still he would try. He would urge it for Viola's sake. She never would bear the thought of leaving her grandfather to die alone.

He brushed his way through the crowd on the piazza, his thoughts intent on this, and not

noticing that the people were all looking, not so much at the cattle or the booths, as at the iron rails that had recently been laid down along the river-side.

"Take care!" said some one roughly, and pushed him off the line just as a great, black, smoking traction engine roared along with some cars attached to it. It was the first journey of the tramway.

"The accursed thing!" cried Carmelo, while the people around him stood sullen and sorrowful, and a few partisans of the novelty tried in vain to shout and wave their hats, and excite enthusiasm.

In the cars were seated in triumph the Cavaliere Durellazzo, Signore Luca Finti, Signore Zauli, the Giunta, and others who had profited by this form of progress; Messer Nellemane sat in a corner of the first car, a smile upon his face, and a crimson rose in his buttonhole.

The ugly thing rolled out of sight amidst the dead silence of the people.

"I'm ruined," said the diligence man, very quietly. "I'll as well go and smoke myself out of the way as Nanni did. Nobody will miss me *now*."

"Why do you let those things be settled and

done behind your backs?" said Carmelo, with suppressed fury, as his eyes flashed. "You are like the poor sheep yonder; you go to the slaughter-house as much as you go to your bed. Who rules here? A few knaves who have the wit to get on your backs, and ride you as we ride an ass."

"And that is true," said the people, ruefully; "but what's to be done? They talk a deal down in the city——"

"Talk! Any fool can talk," said Carmelo passionately. "Talk is reeled out here by every rogue and every dunce, as thread reels off the women's wheel. It is action that we want. Every householder, every honest man, should dare to use his vote in matters of his *borgo*; things should not be done by a few picked knaves behind the backs of all the people. Can't you understand that much?"

"Yes, yes! Bravo! bravo!" the people nearest to him said, and the cattle drivers shouted to him to go on, and Carmelo, warmed and touched by the applause, and having all these months longed to pour out what he had heard in prison, threw his head and raised his voice.

"I have thought much about these things," he said simply. "Prison is a rude teacher, but one that tells no lies. There was a dying man there, who told me that we are all slaves. And what are

we else? We sweat and labour from day-dawn to night, only that they may wring out of us the last penny that we have. Our mothers weep, and our fields lie half-tilled, whilst our youngsters are borne off to swell the army and starve under their knapsacks. Our shipping lies idle in our ports, they tell me, weighed with taxes, till their owners dare not go afloat, and their timbers rot in the harbours. Inland, our little tradesmen are beggared like the merchantmen, and put their shutters up, and go and starve somewhere unseen. Here, in the country places, no man can say his soul is his own; if his dog stir a foot, or his child spin a top, the brutes are down on him; he must pay or be sold up. The King, say you? Nay, he knows nought; he is set round with liars and deceivers like a hedge of aloes and cactus that lets nobody in; the Queen, in mercy, they say many a time pays the fines to redeem the workmen's tools, for these devils seize the spade, the pickaxe, the hammer that the man works with, if there be nothing better. If a man make ten centimes a day he pays the *tassa di famiglia*! you all know that. We are free, are we? And in the cities the barracks are full of bersagliere to shoot us down if we say a word, and in the country there are blackguards with little swords to

spy on every act of our days! Our lives are no more our own. We must pay, pay, pay, till the sweat of our bodies is blood. They grind down our hearts and our lungs, and make them into money to squander. In the accursed factories they have built, the women work for forty centimes a day, and the children for half of that. They tell us we are prosperous and happy, and they tell the world so, at their banquets, and all over the land the people are sold up, and turned adrift and left on the highway, groaning and dying—dying in silence, because they are foolish as sheep, or holy as saints!”

The tears rolled down his face, the dew stood on his forehead; he was but echoing what he had heard in his sick bed in his prison, but he felt every word he uttered with all his heart, and with all his soul.

The people listened to him, entranced; the guard, Bindo Terri, on the outskirts of the crowd, heard too.

“They are true things that you say, lad,” muttered the diligence driver at last. “But what can we do, my dear? If we say a word, if we fire a shot, there are the soldiers, as you say, and the prisons.”

“Then let us say we are slaves, and bow our heads,” said Carmelo, bitterly, as he pointed to the

flag that floated from the caffè of Nuovo Italia, "and let us say that flag is the flag, not of freedom, but of famine, of oppression, and of fear. We starve, and a million leeches are sucking our mother Italy dry. We starve, and a million idlers sit in the public offices and fatten, and do nothing all their lives, and then are pensioned. We are cowards all."

"Go away, my dear, they are looking at you," said Gigi Canterelli in his ear. "And if we all rose, what could we do, my dear? We have no weapons except a few old guns to shoot thrushes, and they would bring cannon against us like lightning."

"What use would their cannon be if they could not get our conscripts?" said Carmelo; his breast was heaving, his eyes were shining.

Bindo Terri advanced to him.

"Instead of talking sedition before witnesses," he said, very sharply, "you had better keep your wife's folk out of want. 'Nunziatina died the night before last in Montesacro."

Then he slipped behind the shelter of a carabinieri.

"What?" said Carmelo, with a scared glance on those around him. "That brute is saying this only

to hurt me. Tell me—tell me quick, some of you. She is not dead? She cannot be dead!”

Gigi Canterelli, who was nearest to him, put his hand soothingly on his shoulder.

“Dear lad,” he said, with hesitation, “I did hear something of it this morning from someone who came from the city, but surely they would have sent you word?”

“No, no,” said Carmelo, stupidly. “No one has said anything to us. Who took her to the city? We knew nought of it. If she be dead—oh, if she be dead! What shall I say to Viola?”

Bindo Terri, safe behind the shelter of the armed carabinieri, answered him.

“We had the official notice of it this morning from Montesacro. You will get it by post this afternoon. She is dead, that you may take my word for; and you had better have worked, and kept her in bread and soup, than come chattering republican balderdash that will clap you *in carcere* again.”

The young man sprang forward to seize the ribald throat that mocked him, but Gigi Canterelli and the others held him quiet.

“Dear lad,” cried Canterelli, “remember your young wife. Get not into trouble again through

this fellow. You will only rejoice his wicked soul if you do."

"The old woman dead," muttered Carmelo. "Dead so, without one of us!"

His voice failed him; he drew his hat over his eyes and turned away.

"If you loved her so much, why did you not keep her off begging on the highway?" called Bindo Terri after him, but he did not hear.

"For shame, Bindo!" said Canterelli, sternly, and the crowd listening around echoed the reproofs.

The guard stuck his feathered hat on one side of his head, and thrust his short sword under one arm.

"If you jeer at me you are summoned," he said, with the pertness that he thought was dignity. "I represent the Law."

"Lord, Lord!" muttered Gigi Canterelli, "and the times that I have spanked you for stealing my string and my sugar!"

Bindo, in his majesty, had his head too high to hear.

Meanwhile the tramway cars were rolling through the summer-scorched fields towards Pomodoro, and there were met by the Count Saverio, and the Syndic his brother, and the officials and gentry of

that place; all, in fact, who had got a nice little pat of butter to sweeten their daily bread out of the concessions and the commissions of this iron apostle of progress.

Carmelo went across the piazza blindly; he was stunned and broken down by the tidings of the death at Montesacro.

She had been only a poor old woman, indeed, but Viola had loved her, and Carmelo himself had grown fond of the cherry, sturdy, little soul, blithe in privation as a robin in the snow.

The poor lad went on rather by instinct than by sight across the square to the house of Pippo.

"He will come with us now," he thought; "surely he will come with us, or he will die as she has done."

When he reached the house his heart stopped with a spasm of fear; the door was shut; a thing never seen except at night, and the wooden outside shutters were closed and fastened too.

What could have happened to Pippo?

"He is ill!" thought Carmelo, but then he remembered that, were he ill within, he could not have fastened to those shutters, and never since he had been a child had he seen those windows thus closed.

He shook the door, and tried to force himself

against it; failing in that, he looked round at a few loiterers who were near; the crowd was all on the other side of the piazza.

"What has happened to Pippo, do you know?" he asked of them.

"Not I," said the man he spoke to, but he grinned as he answered.

Carmelo went round, vaulted over the wall enclosing the little back garden, and saw the house was shut in the same way.

"Good God, what can have happened?" said Carmelo in his bewilderment and terror. Had the old man been murdered? But who should murder one who had nothing?

Remigio Rossi from the mill-house across the river saw him thus standing, rigid and gasping, staring at the house. He shouted to the youth:

"The house has been seized for debt. They turned your grandfather out of it last night. He went away. I thought he went to you. Did nobody send you word? But, to be sure, it was nobody's business. Come in, my poor fellow, and take a drink of wine."

Carmelo hurled a bitter curse at him.

"Where is he gone?" he shouted.

"Nay, that I know not," said the owner of the steam-mill. "We thought he came to you. Lord,

boy, I mean none of you ill-will because I put up this black servant of mine and fill my pockets——”

But Carmelo had no ears for him. He had left the garden as he had entered it, and was gone across the fields. He had seen in the damp ground a print of a foot without shoes: he thought it was Pippo's.

“I never can meet my girl's eyes again if both are dead,” he thought. “Surely he has killed himself like Nanni.”

He heard a step in pursuit of him, and the friendly hand of Gigi Canterelli touched him.

“Carmelo, Carmelo!” he cried to him, “I have just this minute heard that your grandfather was turned out last night. They did it so quietly, none of us knew. It seems the lawyer in Pomodoro had a right to the place because the interest on the mortgage was not paid, and there were sums Pippo owed to the municipality, fines and what not, God knows, about the water, and so the *usciera* came and took the thing, and locked it up, all in the name of the law, and it has been sold at auction: so they say. That is what Angelo, the beast, has just told me. He saw you coming here. How it was we none of us saw or heard I cannot think, but the lawyers and the other folks kept still tongues in

their heads, and the door of the house is turned to the river, and Pippo can never have made a sound——”

“He is gone away to kill himself,” said Carmelo under his breath.

He paid no heed to what was told him of the seizure of the house; all he thought of was that Pippo was lying dead in the Rosa water, or hanging dead from some bough in the fields.

“Nay,” said Gigi Canterelli in a hushed and solemn way, “I think he will not take his life. He is a God-fearing man, is Pippo, and he thinks that in the matter of our living or dying it is the good God that fans our breath or stills it.”

Carmelo did not hear; he was looking to right and left of him wildly, as though he saw the corpse of the old man swinging in the air.

“If he be not dead,” he said, with a burst of weeping like a woman, “he has gone to try and hide, so that we should not know. Look, here is a footmark; it goes along the fields; he would not stay by the river, I think, to see that iron beast roar along it; he would get away into the fields, away from the accursed smoke.”

He strode away as he spoke, and his old friend followed him.

“His brain was not right,” said Carmelo with a

sob. "It has never been right since he signed away his house to pay the thieves yonder. And I, who came to ask him to go with me to a new life——"

"O Lord, have mercy on us," groaned the other. "Nobody ever killed themselves when I was young; but nowadays the rivers are choked full, and the charcoal is used for naught but death."

"Let us look," said Carmelo in a low tone. He felt as if he were choking.

He broke off with a loud cry.

Under one of the maples of the vine-fields that stretched all around he saw the old man sitting. The tree was heavy with green grapes, and the leaves were golden with sunbeams. Pippo was bare-headed, and his head was sunk on his breast.

Carmelo ran to him and threw himself beside him.

"Grandfather, don't you know me? Speak to me! look at me! Don't you see me, *me*, Carmelo? don't you hear?"

The old man's clothes and long white hair were wet with dew; he had been out all night. He lifted his head, but his face was quite vacant. He chuckled a little; and he kept a great old rusty key in his hand. Carmelo saw it, and understood, and his heart stood still.

"They won't get in," said Pippo in a whisper, clutching the key. "They won't get in; I've got the key. It is my house, and I am master. There were many of them, so I took the key and hid. It is my house; it is my house."

That was all he said; he hugged the key against his breast and chuckled.

"It is my house; they'll find I'm master. They've taken a hundred scudi from me, and all the things, and the bed that the girl was born on, and the bit of glass she saw her pretty face in; and the little dog is dead, and the reeds in the river are wanted for the king; but they won't get in the house; I've got the key."

His hands clenched the thing closer and closer; he laughed a little feeble laugh of foolish triumph.

His mind was quite gone.

When the law had seized his house it had given the death-blow to his poor old brain, that for so long had been "buzzing and muddling," and seeing nothing anywhere in the air or in the water, in the sky or on the land, but those figures that had puzzled him so.

"I've got the key, they can't get in; it's my house, it's my house; and when I'm dead you'll

bury me under the almond-trees where the little dog is, and you'll make the house into a chapel," he muttered, clasping the key to his bosom, and looking with blank and foolish eyes into the sunshine that played with the vines.

At that moment, at the banquet in the Pretura of Pomodoro, the Cavaliere Durellazzo was reading out with much applause an oration compiled for him by Messer Gaspardo Nellemane.

In this eloquent speech he spoke of the prosperity of the country, of the excellence of the laws, of the admirable economy that was observed in every public department, of the necessity for Italia to be heard and respected in the councils of Europe, and of the large army that must be one of her chief glories as a great Power.

The discourse was received with great enthusiasm, and was duly reported in the local press and praised in the organs alike of the Opposition, the Dissidenti, and the Ministry.

"I recognise your hand," whispered Signor Luca Finti to Messer Nellemane. "You must become a deputy at the next election; and I make no doubt that you and I some day shall sit as Ministers round the same council table."

Messer Nellemane smiled modestly as he slipped away to send a telegram in the name of the two Syndics to the King, announcing the completion of the great work opened that day.

He saw no reason why the prediction should not be fulfilled; nor, I confess, do I see any. He has every qualification for the honour.

CHAPTER XXI.

AT this moment Santa Rosalia pays two francs a day for Pippo, who has to be kept at the public cost at the asylum of St. Bonifaccio in the city. He is imbecile, and at times violent, but his old frame is tough; he does not die. At times he weeps for days together, and then they punish him. He is always searching for a lost key.

Viola was so unnerved and distracted at the calamity befallen her grandfather that she fell into a fever, which, coupled with her distress of mind, killed her as it killed young Mercédes of Spain: but Viola was not so soon forgotten and replaced. The little "*bimbo*," bereft of his young mother, soon followed her to her grave. Carmelo, maddened with grief, joined himself to some few fiery and chafing spirits, nourished like himself on the bitterness of endless wrong; they tried to burn down the communal palace which held all those accursed documents against the poor, and, failing, were taken prisoners, and after a long trial sent to the galleys. The Italian and English press described them as a

band of ignorant and brutal socialists; and then no one remembered them any more. They are in the mines of Sardinia.

Demetrio Pastorini died broken-hearted; his sons were unable to compete with the steam-mill, and sold the old place to the commune for a pittance; they are some of them day-labourers, and some are taken as conscripts.

Cecco is dead, and his sons are also conscripts. Gigi Canterelli, having the municipality against him, became bankrupt, and is now a beggar; the old convent on the hill is a factory where the women and children earn a few centimes a day with loss of all their health. The little house of the Madonna has been bought and enlarged by Bindo Terri, who has married well and entered into a wine business with the money he saved in his service of the State. His brother succeeded to his uniform and sword, and is as like him as one ferret is like another.

Messer Gaspardo Nellemane meanwhile flourishes like a green bay-tree in the service of the State: he is full of ambition, and in all probability will live to attain all his aims and die in all honour.

Santa Rosalia soon became too small to hold so great a man.

He has been translated to Rome.

When the Dissidenti become the Possidenti he will be with them in power. If, on the other hand, the Right return to office, Messer Nellemane will know how to take profit from the fact that he has always been moderate; he has been always on the side of order and the law.

Whatever party reign at Montecitorio it will be said of him, "Verily he has his reward."

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APPENDIX.

MARK TWAIN has said that an appendix gives a great dignity to a book. Despite this joke at it, it does not scare readers away, perhaps, as greatly as a preface does. At any rate, I will risk the addition, because I want to assure all who take up this story that there is no kind of exaggeration in it.

No doubt the public will be tempted to think that the municipal tyrannies, here depicted, are over-coloured, but I can assure them that I have in not the slightest degree overdrawn the power of those little communal councils, and the terrible suffering that they entail upon the poor people of this beloved country.

Travellers, and even foreign residents, do not, as a rule, know anything about this. You must know the language intimately, and you must have got the people's trust in you, before you can understand all that they endure. The system is, as I have said,

professedly autonomous, but practically it works in the manner I have depicted. The frightful taxation of the noble and gentle is bad; the taxation of the commercial interest, of the shipping, and the trades is still worse; but more cruel by far than all is the municipal extortion by tax, by fine, and by penalty, that crushes out the very life-blood of the peasant part of the nation. There are, of course, communes where some good and wise man is chief proprietor, and then it is fairly well governed. There are others in which the blacksmith or the carpenter is at the head of affairs, and then, though things may go ill, the populace cannot complain. But these are few exceptions, and, in the main part, the twopenny Gessler that I have endeavoured to sketch disposes of its destinies at his will.

It is entirely useless to change the ministries of Italy so long as this municipal system remains what it is. It has ruined Venice, Florence, and Naples, and is ruining Rome; as it has done on a great scale in the cities, so it does on a little one in the small towns and villages. An enormous bureaucracy enriches itself at the public cost, and the people perish.

I believe that these municipal tyrannies might often legally be combated, but the populace cannot afford to do this. I won a cause lately against a municipality, and a shoemaker said to me, "Oh,

there is one law for you rich folks, and another law for us poor!"

And practically it is so; the poor man cannot afford to employ an advocate, and his pleading against false charges or extortion is never attended to; the tax-gatherers or the communal clerks are believed, and the poor man is beggared at a blow. Against the decisions of these small courts also, there is no appeal.

It is no question here of the Right, or of the Left; it is a question of a method of so-called self-government, which goes on and impoverishes and distracts the country just the same, whether Cairolì or Sella, Minghetti or Nicotera, rule at Montecitorio.

It is this which the public of other countries never understand, and which the correspondents of the foreign Press never endeavour to point out. Here Garibaldi does in vain rail against it; nobody attends to him. In vain has he again and again declared the misery of Italy to arise from the locust-swarms of the *impiegati*, and the crowds of pensioners who live on and bleed the State to death. If I ruled Italy, I would ship nine-tenths of the *impiegati* and the pensioners to New Guinea: we might then get public business done, and the public coffers filled, without wrenching his last coin from the day-labourer. When the pensioner dies, his pension dies with him;

but when the accursed *impiegato* leaves his stool of office, another of his breed is ready to spring on to it. He is an alligator that the hot sands of sinecure and corruption generate, and he multiplies without end. All political parties nourish him alike, as all alike continue to allow the local despotisms to cramp and starve the body politic.

One man arose and said this nobly in Montecitorio in the last session: no one listened to him; he was even shouted down; all they care to hear about there is Tunis or Albania, or a new loan.

It is a common remark that Italy wants a Bismarck: she wants nothing of the kind; she wants a minister, temperate, just, indifferent to bombast or display, resolute to destroy corruption, and convinced of the great truth that the first duty of a State is the prosperity of her children. But, alas! when a good man comes, he has no chance; his party split into schisms; the Dissidenti, disappointed of place, sting him like wasps; to be popular with Parliament and the Press, he must talk big of armies, of ships, and of the councils of Europe, and, even if he be premier, it is fifty to one that the great bulk of the populace never even know his name. Harassed, weary, and impotent, he will leave his good intentions to pave a lower deep than Dante ever visited, and, out of heart with all things, will let them drift on in

their old fashion, knowing that you must be a demi-god ere you can sweep clean this Augean stable.

I know the Italian people well; I mean the poor, the labouring people; I am attached to them for their loveableness, their infinite natural intelligence, their wondrous patience; they are a material of which much might be made.

They are but little understood by foreigners, even by foreign residents; they are subtle and yet simple; of an infinite good nature, and yet sadly selfish; they are very docile, yet they have great sensitiveness, and I see no more greed in them than in the poor of all countries; if we had not bread for our hungry children, I daresay we should be greedy too. There are sundry people, very, very poor, to each of whom I give a little sum weekly; *not one* of these people has ever asked for more than the allotted sum, not one has ever made it an excuse to plead for further gifts. Dear readers of mine, can you say as much of your countrymen?

They are ignorant, no doubt, and they are likely to remain so, for the public free education is a farce; the communal schools, when they have taught a boy his letters, set him to teach some smaller boy, and so on *ad infinitum*. They are ignorant, no doubt, and it is the interest of the municipalities, as much as ever it was that of the priesthood, to keep them

so. As it is, they endure all these extortions and tyrannies that I have endeavoured in some measure to depict; endure them patiently, knowing no remedy, and incapable of the general action that can alone make a people's strength felt. Now and then there are clamourers for bread, but very few and gentle ones; there are troops and carabinieri everywhere ready to shoot them down, and if they murmur they are clapped in the Murate, where poor diet and low fever do the rest for most of them.

The nobility and gentry are supine, where they are not tyrannical.

Consequently, the municipalities conduct all affairs high over the heads of the persons concerned, and all sorts of important public works, sales, demolitions, or constructions are effected against the will of the people, who stand helpless.

The Left is inclined to make each commune still more self-governing and independent of the State: should this be done, the effects will be distressing on the populace; on the contrary, it would be far better to confine the syndics of all districts within the limits of imperial law. Their changes and caprices are a source of continual distraction to the country; for instance, at Genoa, a syndic (a well-known general) forbade dogs being given by the city to the vivisectors; a few weeks after came

another syndic, who decreed that all dogs found loose should be seized and sent to the vivisectors' laboratories. This is only one instance out of many.

The illimitable and captious powers of these momentary rulers are a source of worry, grief, and extortion to the people, greater than I can hope to make anyone believe. The whole system is execrable, and leads to endless abuses.

The greater number of the nobles are so absorbed in their own grievance of paying 45 per cent. impost, that they have no ear and no inclination to pity any woes of the poor. The inexhaustible generosity of France has no counterpart in Italy. Even subscriptions for a charitable purpose are very niggardly given, and when given are usually filtered through so many hands in their passage to the poor that little reaches them. Save here and there an asylum, to which it takes strong interest and recommendation to get admitted, there is nothing for the poor; the man or woman who is starving has nothing to do except to die. The great difficulty in Italy is the apathy of the higher classes, and their absolute indifference to the state of the poor. When they do take interest in public affairs, it is too often only for the sake of the personal advantages, the nepotism, the contracts, or the *kudos* that may grow out of it. An Italian, in office of any kind, will

always hear you amiably and courteously, but when you plead for the people he will only think you a fool, and say, "Cara mia, why trouble yourself? They do very well, and they are all of them cheats."

"How can you write books about these *bir-bonaccie*?" said an Italian nobleman to me, meaning about the contadini in *Signa*. "They spend their whole lives in fleecing us. You should never believe a word that they say."

Now, I would be far from declaring that this is the only view that the proprietor takes in Italy, but it is, alas! a very general one.

The number of vagrants and idlers is largely increased by the absurd law of the code which forces every parent to maintain a son, every brother a brother, every husband a wife, &c., however vicious, vile, or incurably lazy they may be; a law which indeed puts a premium on idleness, and attaches a penalty to industry; a law which, in its effects on the youth of the country, is beginning to be dangerous. On those who are industrious and saving, the insatiable taxes bring oftentimes wholesale ruin; every trade and every employment is taxed as if it were a crime; every labouring man must pay his quota, and if he do not pay, his tools and all that he has are forfeited.

A recent Italian writer on the terrible state of

the Romagna and the Marches observes very rightly that the great bulk of the people derive no sort of benefit from all the mass of money thrown away in the alterations of the old streets, and introductions of new methods in the cities. He justly observes that where the pilgrimages, once so continual, took money into all the villages and small towns, the railways take it all away, and render nine-tenths of the provinces through which they pass poverty-stricken. The tunnels of the Alps have the effect of drawing away the food that the nation itself requires. A few contractors are enriched; but the markets of the populace are denuded, and only the worst of the products of the soil, and of meat and poultry, finds its way to the nation's mouth. Any night that you go down to any railway station when the goods-trains pass, you will see tons on tons of vegetables, fruits, and butchers' meat going to France or Germany. What can be more disastrous, also, for a country whose populace chiefly depend for all their bodily strength on wine, to sell their grapes to French and German merchants? Yet this is what the landowners have been doing this year right and left. Dazzle the eyes of an Italian with a little immediate profit, and alas! you may plunge him headlong into any folly, make him consent to any speculation.

It is irritating to see the foreign press, which knows nothing actually of the condition of things, laying down the law on Italian affairs. The English press attributes all the official evils of new Italy to the transmitted vices of the old *régimes*. Now I did not live during the old *régimes*, and cannot judge of them; but this I do know, that the bulk of people regret passionately the personal peace and simple plenty that were had under them. The vices of the present time are those of a grasping and swarming bureaucracy everywhere, and of the selfishness which is the worst note of the Italian character.

“Why do you care for that horse being hurt? It is not your horse,” everyone will say to you; an impersonal interest is a thing they cannot conceive.

“*Una vanità enorme, un’ aspro cinicismo ed i suoi interessi,*” says an Italian journalist of a living Italian minister, alone govern his conduct. Substitute for the bitter cynicism an indolent amiability that never exerts itself, and you have the characters of most Italian public men. The well-meaning have no power to cope with the vast inert mass of nepotism and corruption that block the way to all real economy, to all true justice. Whatever names and parties change in the government, these always remain the same. *Plus ça change plus c’est la même chose.*

As an ounce of example is said to be worth a

pound of precept, I will cite the following cases which have come under my eyes in the last three months:

1. A man living in one commune, but on the borders of another, having paid his taxes in the first, naturally refused to pay them over again in the second. As he would not submit to be twice taxed, the commune got a summons out against him with its usual result of distraint. He had nothing of any value but a gun; they seized that. A gentleman took the case up, and obliged them to confess the man had been in the right; they promised to return the gun, but as yet they have "not been able to find it."

2. A contadino was going up a steep hill with some very heavy barrels of wine. Being a merciful man, to lighten his beast, he placed two barrels by the roadside, meaning to fetch them later. He was seen by a rural guard, though it was in a wild and lonely part of the hills. He was subsequently summoned and fined ten francs! There is a rule in rural police laws that a man must never let his horse pause in the road to rest; *it would be an obstruction.*

3. The wife of a navvy who remains in a city of central Italy while her husband is gone to work in Sardinia is in very great necessity and almost

penniless; she has only a few sticks of furniture in a wretched room. One of her children fell ill with fever, and a gentleman sent her in a little bed for the sick child. The officers of the law saw the bed going in, and immediately assessed her for eight francs *tassa di famiglia*. She had not eight pence for the week's bread. They might as well have asked her for a million.

What can one say of a municipal government in which such a state of things is possible?

Meanwhile, in the public offices, tens of thousands of dawdling youngsters lounge in for a few hours, and are subsidised at from a thousand to two thousand francs a year, to be entirely useless and grossly impudent.

A respectable man went the other day to pay something at a public office. Three young men were gossiping on the ground floor. They said, "it is not our business, go to the first floor;" the first floor sent him to the second, the second to the third; the third to the fourth; the fourth told him it was business for the ground floor. When he returned there they yawned and bade him "come back to-morrow."

At the customs-offices, again, no one can be seen till nine; at three a great bell rings, and away they all go and the place is shut; a gardener of mine

went to get a little parcel weighing half a chilo, and prepaid from Germany. They kept him four hours, then sent him away without it because the bell rang. He was kept from eleven to two the next day, and finally, with a sheaf of signed papers long enough to sign away a kingdom, he got the little parcel, which was only a book. Garibaldi used to curse the "black shoals" of the priesthood; the "black shoals" of the *impiegati* are a more ravenous, more idle, and far more cruel class; they are an unredeemed curse to the country, and if I could I would send nine-tenths of them to hard labour to-morrow. When a poor man goes to pay a tax for a dog there are all sorts of excuses from the *impiegati*; it is not the time to pay it, the books are being revised, he may come in a month, the streets are being renumbered, he had better call again when they are finished; anyhow, he cannot get his receipt. A little later down comes the Esattore of the commune for arrears of the dog tax. In vain the poor man protests; no one believes him. When he has paid, the demand is made over and over again. They assessed a poor baker the other day for the two years' dog tax with penalties; happily, I had paid the tax for him and so worsted them, as I produced the receipts. But if he had been alone, his receipts would have been insufficient to protect him.

This whole, enormous, and insatiable bureaucracy is like a sytaris; a sytaris, as you know, hides on a bee's back, gets taken into the hive, then slips into the cell where the bee larva lies steeped in honey, and tucking itself snugly up in the cell, kills the larva and sucks all the honey; one fine day, having grown fat and mature, it flies away.

To the bureaucracy the whole public is what the bee larva is to the sytaris grub; a means of growing plump and living in sweetness. This is no question of ministries; it is a much deeper question; that of a gangrene putrefying in the body politic of the nation.

There is a little Almanac sold for a soldo and bought by tens of thousands of the poor of Italy, which, in a very well-written little article addressed "Ai Signori Ministri," speaks of the unutterable misery brought on the industrious and honest classes by the frightful taxation which makes the peasant of Italy scarcely better off than the fellah of Egypt.

Referring to the projected law of Seismet Doda for relieving the poor of these burdens (a law which is for ever being "considered" by the Chambers, but never passed), it proceeds to point out how all the small proprietors and the respectable poor are being utterly destroyed off the land. All the working people who are ordered to pay fines, six, seven,

eight, or ten *lire* to the tax-gatherer, or the municipal police, are sold up if they cannot pay—sold up to the very tools of their trade.

The Esattore (examiner of taxes) published in one day for the little *borghetto* of Rocca Magna no less than fourteen forced sales* of the houses or land of very poor men, which had been seized in the name of the State; little houses of three hundred or two hundred *lire* in worth, and in one instance the tax-gatherer seized and sold a piece of arable ground at the price of a hundred and ten francs. Everything is confiscated, because, to the simple tax due, there are added all the expenses of fine, of execution, of law-dues, and costs of auction!

Let no one think that my poor old Pippo is an exaggeration. Pippo has a thousand, and ten thousand suffering likenesses of himself all over the land.

The little Almanac adds, bitterly and justly:

“If all these working people, once content and laborious, thus dispossessed and driven out, cumber the prison, whose fault will it be? Who has caused them to change from peaceful, happy, country folks to despairing beggars? In the last few years, nearly *two million* small proprietors have been ruined and sent into beggary; at the same time all beggary is treated as a crime deserving imprisonment.”

* Vendita all' asta, *or*, al incanto.

It concludes with the threat, *Guai a voi, Deputati e Ministri, se meriterete la maledizione dei poveri!*

This is no vice of an old *régime*. In the old *régime* there was scarcely any taxation; it is the vice of a hard, grasping, and greedy bureaucracy, and of the fatal appetite for devouring public money, and manner of regarding every public place as a mere opportunity and occasion for private enrichment, which are the characteristic of all the public and political life of the country.

In addition to this overwhelming taxation, there is the black mail incessantly levied from the poor by the penalties that the municipalities assess at their pleasure and discretion. Half of these go to the municipal guard, and in the advertisements in newspapers inserted by communes who want a candidate for this noble office, this share of the fines is advertised as one of the attractions and perquisites of the post. It is easy to imagine what the public suffer when three or four of these legalised and interested spies are allowed to stalk about every country lane, and peer into every hedge and spinney.

The timid purchase immunity from their torment at heavy cost of bribes; the courageous suffer incessantly from their espionage and hatred. By the police regulations of these gentlemen every harmless act in a day of country life may furnish

food for fine and penalty. The testimony of the guard is taken as witness enough; and the poor man, harassed and fleeced by those set over him, and who should protect him, has no resource but to submit and pay. It is not too much to say that this daily and hourly tyranny and extortion of the myrmidons of the municipalities are, all over Italy, sowing the seeds of a bitter hatred of all Law.

The honest peasant sees himself ceaselessly spied on, worried, summoned, fined for all sorts of harmless little things; his dog barks on his wall, his child spins a top on the road, or bathes in a river, he lays an armful of brushwood on a lonely forest path, he rests his old horse a moment by the wayside; forthwith the spy is down on him, and he has to deliver over all his wages for the day, perhaps all his wages for the week, to the petty officers and judges who are banded together in a body to pillage him. If he will bribe, he will be let alone: if he will not, he will be persecuted for all time till they make him a beggar.

Until this system is entirely abolished and replaced by something of real freedom for all honest men, I see no peace possible for the people; and were their rulers not blind as moles they would hasten to pluck out this "thorn from the foot" ere its canker spreads over the whole body.

But alas! no one in office cares about any of these things. A week ago a famous Italian doctor rose in the Chambers and drew attention to the destruction of the woods of Latium and the rural guards' connivance at these repeated infringements (for base reasons) of forest-law. He was listened to with apathy; and the minister concerned coldly said—he would inquire!

But all those present could see that this inquiry would be the last thing that he would deem it worth his while to make.

It is strange that with the present state of Ireland before their eyes the whole of the public men of Italy should be as indifferent as they are to the perpetual irritation of all the industrious classes at the hands of the municipalities and their organisation of spies and penalties. But indifferent they are: whether Bismarck approve of their Greek policy, or Gambetta do not oppose their doings at Tunis is all they think about; the suffering of a few million of their own people is too small a thing to catch their attention; they think like Molière's doctor—"Un homme mort n'est qu'un homme mort, et ne fait point de conséquence, mais une formalité négligée porte un notable préjudice à tout le corps de médecins."

No one can accuse me of any political preju-

dices. My writings have alternately been accused of a reactionary conservatism and a dangerous socialism, so that I may, without presumption, claim to be impartial; I love conservatism when it means the preservation of beautiful things; I love revolution when it means the destruction of vile ones.

What I despise in the pseudo liberalism of the age is that it has become only the tyranny of narrow minds vested under high-sounding phrases, and the deification of a policeman. I would give alike to a Capucin as to a Communist, to a Mormon as to a Monk, the free choice of his opinions and mode of life. But this true liberty is nowhere to be found in Europe, and still less to be found in America; and this pseudo liberty meddles with every phase of private life, and would dictate the rule of every simple act.

Every noble-hearted theorist of a future of freedom has died in heart-broken disillusion; from the Girondists of the past century to those, who, with high hopes, shouted in chorus to Silvio Pellico the *Bianca croce di Savoia!* Thousands of gallant and goodly lives are thrown away like water in the effort to create a fair Utopia of free action and untroubled peace; and all that, in the end, is born of their sacrifice is a horde of weazels and of leeches, who suck the body of the nations dry; vermin who bear

upon their backs a swarm of smaller parasites as pestilent as themselves.

Gianbattista Niccolini, walking with Centofanti one day in Florence, shouted to two monks:

“Go and get a spade and dig, you good-for-nothings!”

This is what, nowadays, the poor man—laborious and honest—seeing the idle eaters of the public funds swarming in and out of every public office, every municipality, every custom house, mutters in his soul against the accursed *impiegato*.

It is a change of masters, it is true, but it is no deliverance. It is the old tale of Jeannot's knife; blade and handle have both been changed, but it is the same knife still, and here it cuts the hand that forged it.

Yet again one of the deepest sins of the State against the public is the Government lottery.

It is difficult to imagine a more absurd anomaly, a more entirely indefensible contradiction, than the severity exercised by the State towards all private games and street games, and the selfishness with which it continues to be itself the centre of the most demoralising system of gaming that can be devised for the ruin of the people. The interference of the State with private gambling is carried to an inquisitive and impertinent excess; yet at the same

time, for sake of profit, the Government carries on a gigantic machinery more fatal in its effects on the populace than any Casino like Monte Carlo. In the Casino it may be said that none are victims save those who voluntarily seek the pernicious attraction, and they are most of them people, who, if they could not play there, would play at home. Paris baccarat is ten times worse than Monte Carlo's roulette; but the public lottery is ten times worse than Paris baccarat, because the State comes out and seeks the poor man as he takes his hard-earned wages, descends amidst the populace, woos, entices, enervates, intoxicates, and beggars them.

"Ah! the State is a clever one," said a working man to me the other day. "It sells everything else to the Hebrews, but it takes good care to keep the lottery itself."

And this is true; everything else, down to the rights of Octroi at the gates of cities, are sold to the Jew syndicates, but the Government retains the lottery; and it may be safely affirmed that so long as it does retain this vile thing, so long will the sin and the sorrow of the multitudes lie at its doors. Not merely does it foster the fatal superstition which makes the study of "lucky numbers" and "dream omens" the sole thought of the people, but in the rare cases where the poor man wins, the sudden de-

lirium of riches has an effect like poison on him, and he spends all in a brief summer phrenzy to perish afterwards in beggary or a mad-house. The lottery takes all the earnings of the labouring classes in all the cities, usurps all their mind and hopes, keeps them for ever in that fever of longing which is in itself a moral disease, and encourages in them alike the lowest greed and the most enervating indolence.

No one seems to dare to lift up a voice against it, but until a minister shall arise who will destroy it, the nation will have no faithful public servant.

I would sooner see a Casino like Monte Carlo in every city of Italy, if thus the lottery could be abolished, than I would see as I do, daily and hourly, the legalised publicity of this accursed destroyer of the people allowed all over the land, whilst boys playing *morra* for coppers are seized by the police!

The system, too, to which I alluded above, of selling the Octroi and other public taxes to individuals or companies, is productive of evils which it would be impossible without volumes of statistics, fully to describe. A grasping speculator, or group of spectators, buys up the rights of taxation over a city or a province, and makes the most out of the speculation that can be made. I ask the

reader to think over for a moment all that this implies, all that this permits.

Yet who speaks of all these terrible and frightful evils—evils by which the country is impost-laden till it sinks like the over-weighted camel?

No one. The journals write beautiful threnodics over the grave of Ricasoli, and Rochefort shakes hands with Garibaldi, and who amidst the mouthing and the posturing of it all cares one straw for the nation, for the people?

The ranting demagogues of Milan care as little as the *amnistié* of the Cité Malesherbes or the satrap of the Palais Bourbon.

The one shriek for Universal Suffrage and the others shriek for the Commune or for the March Decrees and the Scrutin de Liste; but when does the one speak of abolishing the lottery or the other of abolishing the conscription?

When Madame Roland spoke her farewell words to liberty, she prophesied the whole hypocrisy of the century to come.

I want people to get these facts that I have narrated well into their minds; to turn their eyes a moment from the Italian men-of-war joining the Naval Demonstration of the Powers, and the Italian

troops deploying in the Val d'Aosta and the Mugello,* and look into these million humble homes, darkened and naked, and see these children without food, these men without hope, who suffer that the pomp and parade of an empty boast may throw dust in the eyes of Europe.

I cannot think to make you care for these people as I care for them; I, who know that they see their radiant sun for ever through a mist of tears, who know that their hard-won bread is eaten with the gall of fear and of oppression tainting the sour crust, who know that their little children tremble in their town alleys and country lanes, and fly with their hunted dog from the armed myrmidon of a relentless and ignominious law; I cannot think to make you suffer for them as I do, but still I think you will not refuse to feel some pity for them and some pain.

Italy is essentially a pastoral country. Those who would turn it into a manufacturing one would be as those who should turn a tabernacle of Giotto's

* The manœuvres in the Mugello alone cost the country two millions of *lire*; yet the men had but one ration in twenty-four hours, and were on one occasion kept from one noon to the next fasting, and without even a drop of wine. These few days of sham battles cost precisely as many francs as there have been small proprietors ruined by the taxes!

into a breeding hutch of swine. The people thrive on their pure ambient air, they pass their lives under their unsullied skies, they love laughter, song, dance; and still—with the pipe of Corydon and the smile of Adonis—welcome the harvest night and the vintage morn. Up in the hills and in the green places remote from cities, the old, simple, contented, pastoral life still prevails, and there the husbandman follows Christ and recites Tasso; maybe he cannot read the words of either, what of that? Raoul Rigault and Passanante, the murderer Prevost, and the murderess Virginie Domaine, could all of them read. Were they the better for it?

In its simplicity, in its freedom, in its purity of family affection, and in its Greek-like habits of husbandry, I believe the unspoiled country life of Italy to be the best that remains to humanity on the face of the earth. When the childish pettifoggers of the new school scream with puerile ecstasy at the sight of a tramway, of a steam thresher, they know not all the beauty, content, and pious peace that they destroy only to enrich some Scotch contractor or some Hebrew usurer. There are 40,000 Jews in Italy, and to them are going all the old estates, all the old palaces, and all the old heirlooms; the Italian noble, no more content to dwell as dwelt his forefathers, aspires to be beggared by the *belles petites*

of Paris or the baccarat of some fashionable hell; the Italian people beholding all their old plenty and ancient rights slipping away from them, stand sullen and full of futile wrath to see all that for twice a thousand years has been their own, passing into the coffer of the foreign speculator or moneylender. This ruin is called Progress—and the whole land groans, and the whole people curse.

Beyond all else, I repeat, is Italy a pastoral country. All its peace and its joy lie amidst its smiling fields. The conscription that takes all its country lads from plough and spade, from vineyard and chestnut wood because its leaders are bitten with the mania of meddling and marring in the councils of Europe, does the same evil to the land that do the foreign speculators who cover the country with unfinished rails and demolished buildings in that cruellest of all greeds, the greed of the hungry gambler of the stock-exchange. The temptations to the peasant to leave his hillside for the cities, which those gamblers for their own ends put before him as improvement, is as merciless and fatal as any tempting of Satan to innocent souls of old. Most unhappily the rural life all the world over is spoken of now with scorn; yet it is certain that the rural life is the safest, the healthiest, the sweetest, and above all it is so here where the climate

makes the mere living out-of-doors a poem and a picture.

Compare the mechanic of Wakefield or Blackburn with the pall of black soot hung for ever between him and the sun, and his superficial repetitions of Darwin or Bradlaugh urged as evidence of an enlightened mind; compare his automatic hideous toil, his hard hatred of all classes save his own, his dwelling one amidst rows of a thousand similar, his wilderness of dark, foul-scented streets, his stench of smoke, his talk of agnosticism and equality narrow as the routine of his life, his shallow sophisms, his club, his strikes, his tommy-shop; compare him and these with the Italian labourer of the Luchese hills, or the Santa Fiora forests, or the Val d'Arno farms, rising to see the glorious sky glow like a summer rose, dwelling in his wide, stout, stone-built house old as the trees around him, following in their course as the seasons change his manly and healthful labours, reaping and binding, sowing and mowing, guiding his oxen through the vines, having for ever around him the gladdest and most gracious nature; at noontide sitting down as the patriarch sat amidst his family and labourers to a homely plenty; at eventide resting to see the youths and maidens dance, and listen to the old pastoral love songs sung to the thrum of the guitar

or the story of the Gerusalemme Liberata passed down by word of mouth from sire to son. Compare these two lives; they are no fancy pictures. You may see either of them any day you will; and tell me whether I am wrong when I dread, as the plague was dreaded of old, the false teachers, who, to fill their own purse try to persuade the southern peasant to covet the northern workmen; who try to say gas is fairer than the sun, and the oiled piston sweeter than the honey breath of the cattle, and the anathema of Fourier and Bakounine lovelier and wiser than the strophe of Ariosto and of Dante.

Italy for the Italians! yes; with the municipal extortions made a thing of the past like the Inquisition, and the Jew usurer, and the English and American speculator, denied the soil they covet and pollute. This would well be the fitting war-cry of the Italy of to-day, who has darker foes made welcome in her midst than even the Austrian and the Bourbon that she banished.

Let me give but one example of the delightful natural intelligence which the new schools are striving to replace with the scientific smattering of the factory and foundry mechanic, and I will weary you no more.

In a letter published in 1859 to the celebrated

Tommaseo, Professore Giuliani narrates the story of a woman called Beatrice in the Pistoiese Apennines—a woman he knew well—a poor, hard-working, country-bred creature, who knew not a single letter of the alphabet, but who improvised on the death of a beloved son, in a passion of grief and weeping, the most perfect poem in the always difficult *ottave*. This woman was but one amidst others, who all had, in a greater or a lesser degree, this grand poetical faculty, and harmony of ear, and who, when asked to teach their power to a stranger, answer with a smile,

Volete intender lo mio imparare?

Andar per legna, or starmene a zappare.

What can the communal schools substitute for that one half so ennobling, so inspiriting, so sublime, as those natural bursts of song amidst the solitudes of the everlasting hills?

“If you would learn to sing like me,” she says, “come with me to gather the hillside wood, or stay beside me to hoe the earth; this rich and kindly earth which flowers for ever for you, making the almond bloom in the winter cold, and the cyclamen in the autumn mists, and all spring and summer shower on you blossoms with both hands.”

How right she is, this wise old woman eloquent!

What can the schools give us that will equal what Nature offers? Let us dwell, as she does, face to face with the blue sky, the mountain solitude, the forest freedom, and we shall see as she sees. This is what I would keep for this lovely land which has become mine, for these beloved people who are now my own, this fresh, natural intelligence, this healthful Greek-like life. And this is what day by day is perishing, crushed out under the weight of the impost of the municipalities and the engine-wheels of the greedy contractor. As an Italian writer* has said aright: "As little by little our beautiful forests and green woodland growth fall before love of lucre and greedy desire, and give place to the smoke and the stench of the machine and the shaft, as our hillsides crumble and fall away, and our flowering meadows and our fair cultured fields vanish with them, so does equal craze for gain possess our people in the cities, and, bringing amidst them a strange and foreign element, corrupts our hearts as it corrupts our tongue."

She, who on the mountain side mourned for her son as Tasso might have mourned, is ordered to

* Professore Tigri.

give place to the parrot-phrase and automaton-learning of the school-crammed puppet; the old happy innocent nights in the valley and on the hills, when the youths came with violin and mandoline to bid the maidens dance *trescone* or *galletta* in the moonlight, or gathered about the wood fire in the winter time singing *romanzetti* and *strombetti*, and telling the old-world tales of the Queen of Cyprus, and Ginevra, and Piramo and Tisbe, are bidden to change and render up their place to wordy dispute of windy politics, and feverish suppers in crowded winehouses, where the pure juice of the grape is lost in alcohol and chemicals.

The peasant-improvisatrice is to become the hollow-cheeked toiler of mill or machine; the happy husbandman is to become the sullen and savage mechanic with rotten lungs and watery blood; the songs, sweet and strong as wild birds' notes, are to be drowned in the hoarse shouts of the proletariat; and the luxuriant, vigorous, natural intelligence is to be poisoned with the false logic of communism or stifled in the lifeless mechanical repetition of the schools.

Forbid it, O Apollo Cytherœdus! here, where the echo of thy divine lute still may be heard at evenfall, when the shepherd pipes, and the maiden sings, in the green myrtle hollows and on the pine-

crowned heights! Arise and protect these thine offspring!

Let the false guides not take from thy children alike the bread that is life, and the pure air that is health, and the music that is laughter and is love!

THE END.

Ouida

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